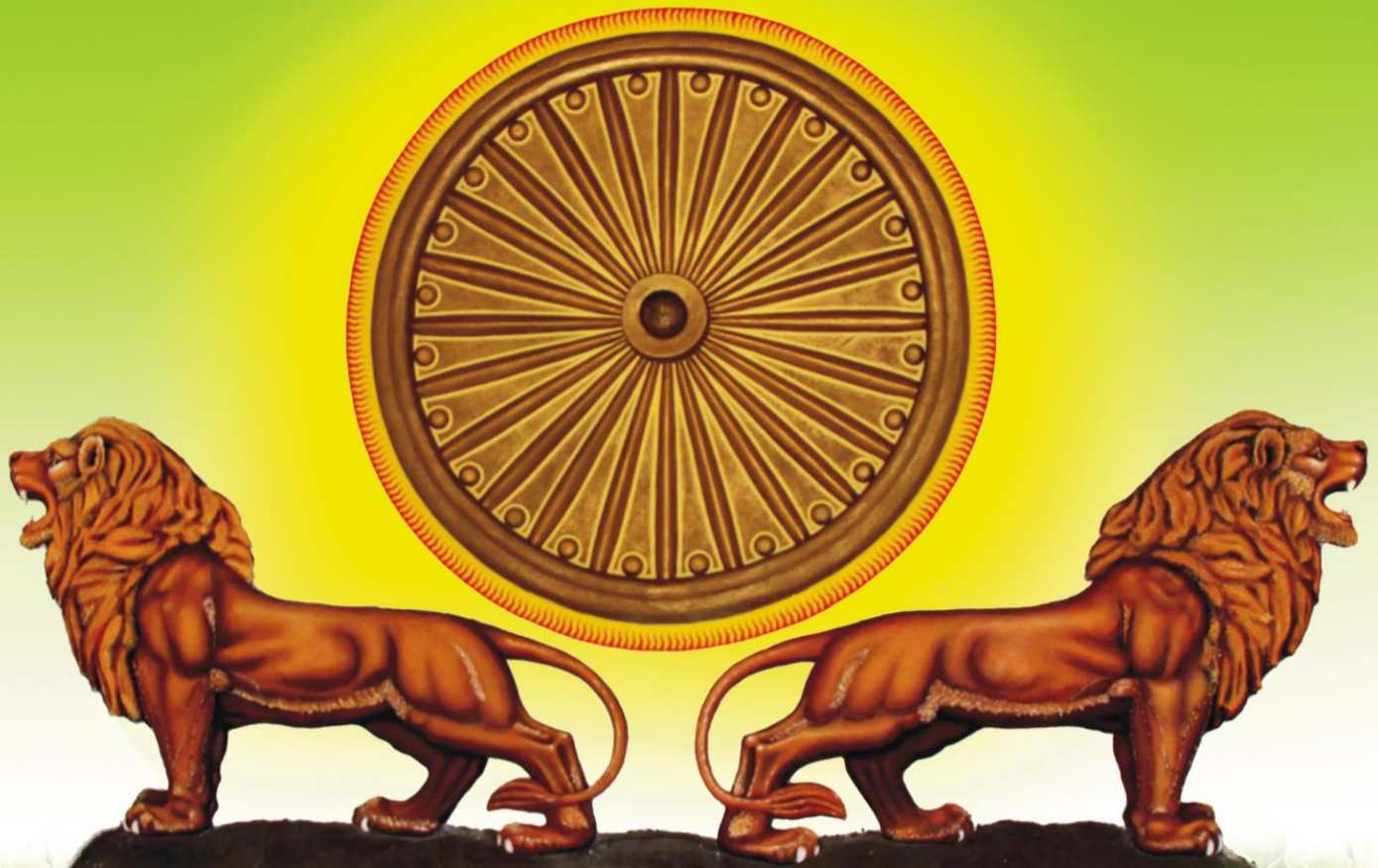


A blessing indeed for me, the association of kalyānamittas..

# Advice about Advice



Ven. Bhikkhu Nawalapitiye Ariyawansa

A blessing indeed for me, the association of kalyānamittas.

# Advice about Advice

(Book-3)

(English translation of the Sinhala book

“Awavadayak Gena Awavadayak”)

A summary of the sermons delivered by **Ven. Bhikkhu Ariyawansa** to the novice monks who were ordained in May 2008 in Mahamevnāwa Mahā Vihāra in Matara in order to enable them to make a success of their lives as monks.

Mahamevnāwa Buddhist Monastery

**A blessing indeed it is to associate with kalyānamittas.**

# **Advice about Advice**

**Venerable Bhikkhu Nawalapitiye Ariyawansa  
Mahamevnāwa Buddhist Monastery**

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This booklet has been prepared incorporating the instructions given to monks newly ordained at Mahamevnāwa Monastery to enable them to make a success of their monkhood.

These instructions have been given for the sole benefit of the resident monks at Mahamevnāwa.

But any honest and humble person who would like to lead a successful life will be able to use these Dhamma facts given herein and apply them to their lives.

### **My best wishes!**

The community of monks of the Mahamevnāwa Buddhist Monastery has created a collection of booklets by compiling the valuable advice given to the newly ordained monks at the Mahamevnāwa Mahā Vihāra in Matara, Sri Lanka.

They include:

- Let us be Faithful to Mahamevnāwa
- Let us take Delight in the Supreme Buddha's dispensation
- Advice about Advice
- Life as a beautiful season of rain
- What is our responsibility?
- Let us enter the beautiful land of true people

All of the advice included in these books have been given by most venerable Bhikkhu Ariyawansha of Nawalapitiya, who has been appointed by me as the chief advisor to the entire group of Mahamevnāwa Monasteries.

I read these books of advice with great interest. The advice given was truly wonderful. It is like giving a delicious drink to a person in thirst. It is like showing guidance to a person who has lost his way. It is like providing protection to an individual who is frightened. It is like illuminating a place of darkness. This advice provides a good background for a person to gain a real refuge.


It is our fortune that bhikkhus like Venerable Ariyawansha of Nawalapitiya have come into being in this world in order to maintain and name this immaculate doctrine of Gautama Supreme Buddha flourish, which was elucidated and revived by me with great difficulty.

Regardless of whether one is a newly ordained or an older monk, if one is to follow and practice this impeccable advice, compassionately given by Venerable Ariyawansha, I assure it will undoubtedly benefit that person.

It is comforting to see that my dream of reviving the pure Gautama Buddha's dispensation which was about to disappear forever has come true, at least to this extent today.

May my blessings be to Venerable Ariyawansha, the bhikkhus of Mahamevnāwa, meritorious anagarikas, and lay devotees who practice this path of Dhamma while also rendering help to Mahamevnāwa. With the blessings of the Noble Tripe Gem and the protection gained from deities, may they have the opportunity to practice this path of Dhamma peacefully without facing any obstacles!

with mettā



01 - 01 - 2009

Bhikkhu Kiribathgoda Gnānānanda

## **A word about the book**

Mahamevnāwa is a splendid gift to me. It is an astonishing and exquisite endowment for the world, benefiting both gods and humans.

Therefore, my wish is: **“May this exquisite endowment exist in the world for a very long time! May this be encountered by many people. May none of us in Mahamevnāwa be mentally weakened. May all of us be strong! May all of us recognize the real treasure in Mahamevnāwa and acquire it! May we find true happiness through it. May they help others too to achieve true happiness. May we be devoid of immoral and inferior qualities.”**

It is based on this aspiration that I advised the monks who were in my association over some time. We came to know that those who listened to that advice benefitted from it and rejoiced it. And I feel that they all agree with my idea that I have mentioned above. And I feel that they all agree with my wish for the welfare for all.

At first, we did not have the intention of printing these advices as a book. But, those who took delight in that advice felt that others will benefit, if they too have the opportunity to hear them. **Therefore, with the sole intention of “May many gain benefit from them...” this advice was compiled to be printed as a series of books.**

May this advice help shape and develop delightful and wonderful thoughts in the hearts of students who were born in Mahamevnāwa Monastery, which was created by Lokuswaminwahanse (Ven. Bhikkhu Kiribathgoda Gnānānanda) with much compassion and great effort.

**Bhikkhu Nawalapitiye Ariyawansa**

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### **Here is some advice about advice!**

You should not procrastinate. You should not get into the habit of delaying things. Through procrastination, we lose everything that is good in our lives. We fall into the habit of procrastination by allowing inferior and immoral qualities to develop within us.

We procrastinate when we give significance to what is in fact futile and insignificant. We procrastinate when we become unskilled in recognizing what is truly important and what isn't. It is in order to help you identify what is truly important and what is not, that we advise you saying, **"Do it this way, do not do it that way."** Sometimes, we may advise gently and at other times harshly.

But you must remember that we advise harshly at times to some people because we trust that they will take the advice to their advantage. Persons in whom we have the most trust are advised most strongly. Those who we do not trust are not advised in that same way. We advise you harshly because we are confident that you are an obedient person who will take advice given to you to correct your mistakes. And most of all, we advise you in this way because we feel that you are "one of us."

Sometimes, we may advise harshly. But you must understand that **this harsh advice is given only out of compassion**. It becomes necessary to use strong language at times because advice given with kind and gentle words is not taken seriously. **But whether it is harsh or gentle advice, always remember that advice is given for your own benefit.**

The person who accepts advice in this manner becomes happy. He becomes even friendlier with the person who gives advice. Giving advice is like showing the way to a person who has lost his way; it is like providing light to a person living in darkness; it is like feeding a starving person.

Now imagine that a person comes along and gives some food to that starving person. Upon receiving the food, would he be happy or sad? Would he be friendly with the person who gave him the food or would he be angry with him? Now, do you understand? You must always remember that advice is given to you only to fix and rise above mistakes.

If a person realizes that advice is given solely for his benefit and welfare, will he be happy or unhappy about being advised? If he realizes that advice is given only for his benefit and wellbeing and if he realizes that had he not received that advice, he would have fallen into

trouble, will he feel distressed by advice? Or will he be happy? Will he stop associating with those who advise him, or will he continue to associate with them? He will continue to associate with them, wouldn't he? He will continue to do so because he realizes that this is a place that will help him cultivate what is good.

**So you must think in this way: "If advice is given, it is only for my benefit." Do not try to assess the nature of the advice {harsh or nice}. And always remember that advice is given to you out of compassion.**

If a person does not think in this way, then he will only be troubled by advice. And ultimately he will complain about the person who advised him saying: "He blamed me, he scolded me." (In the ordinary world, blaming someone means saying something unbeneficial and harmful.) Why would he speak in this way? It is because he does not know that advice given to him was given out of compassion. Instead, he feels that the person who advised him did it to hurt him.

What kinds of people feel this way? Those who take delight in superficial things feel this way. They do not like receiving advice from others; instead, they are easily troubled by them. They only like praise and compliments.

But the kalyāṇamitta (noble friend) does not like to please us with superficial things. He only likes to see us develop our basic human goodness. As a result, he may advise rather harshly at times. So we must always remember not to take delight in what is superficial and insignificant because if we do, then we become troubled by advice given for our own good.

Furthermore, we must have a strong desire in our hearts to be free from defilements: **passion, hatred and delusion**. We must try to strongly embed that thought in our hearts. In order to do this, we should recollect the danger and suffering caused by this saṃsāra (cycle of birth and death). We must learn the Four Noble Truths and relate them to our own lives.

These teachings show us the true nature of our lives. They teach us about a part of life that we were unaware of. If a person learns the Four Noble Truths and relates them to his own life, then the thought, "I must eradicate this passion, hatred and delusion within me," arises in his mind.

Such a person comes to like being advised (advice in the Sāsana refers to the help one receives to eradicate passion, hatred and delusion). So, who comes to like being advised? Those who wish to eradicate passion, hatred and delusion. Such a person does not become concerned about the nature of advice. He takes delight in advice of any nature, whether harsh or kind. He is delighted because he knows that it was advice he received that helped him escape from a possible danger. So he wishes to continue to remain in the association of kalyāṇamittas to receive further advice.

He praises this advice. He speaks well of the person who gave that advice. And in each of these moments, his mind is established in wholesome thoughts. As a result, he lives happily. His unwholesome thoughts become suppressed by his wholesome thoughts and he engages in meditation easily.

In addition, when he speaks well of the person who gave advice, he engages in the ten wholesome topics of conversation. Therefore, his mind continues to remain in a wholesome state, delightedly. Fuel no longer exists to feed the five hindrances. As a result, he is able engage in meditation easily. When he meditates, the hindrances become suppressed and his mind becomes concentrated. He is now able to achieve right view, the true understanding of the Four Noble Truths.

On the other hand, imagine an individual who continues to have superficial and immoral wishes. He thinks, “I wish I could become famous. I wish I could gain praise and honor.” However, the kalyāṇamitta does not want to see that person trapped in such an unwholesome state. Therefore, he advises him.

So at times the kalyāṇamitta may advise gently and at other times harshly. But you must remember that the kalyāṇamitta does not advise gently because he is attached to you. And similarly, he does not advise harshly because he is against you. He acts in both ways out of compassion towards you.

This is the special quality one can see within a kalyāṇamitta of the Sammāsambuddha Sāsana. Why must we learn to recognize this quality? It is because the ordinary mind likes only gentle speech. But advice may not always be in that form. It can be in strong and harsh language as well.

So you must always remember, “My kalyāṇamitta may advise me in a harsh and strong manner, but he does so out of compassion towards me.” If he is close to you and has confidence in you then he will not hesitate to advise you harshly in order to help you fix your mistakes. This is a special quality seen within a kalyāṇamitta. Confidence in this context refers to the conviction the kalyāṇamitta has that the person being advised is a humble and obedient person.

Therefore, if the kalyāṇamitta advises you strongly, think in this way: **“He is doing so because of his trust in me and that his advice will only benefit me.”**

### **A beautiful example**

Let’s look at it this way. When her own child is stubborn, a mother strictly advises him and may even spank him. But, if a child of an outsider makes that same mistake, that same mother will stroke his head and say, “Dear child, don’t do such things.” She may even give him a candy to encourage him to not make that same mistake.

What is the reason behind this mother's contradictory behavior? The former is her own child and therefore she loves him very much. She also trusts that he will not be disobedient to her. It is because of this trust that she advises him strongly. A kalyāṇamitta's advice is just the same. So you must understand why a kalyāṇamitta may gently advise you at times and rather harshly at other times. If you do not understand this, then you can fall into trouble very easily. Some people found advice given by Lokuswaminwahanse, Ven. Gnānānanda to be too strong and ended up leaving Mahamevnāwa. So we must always remember that we are here because we have devoted our life to reach something supreme, and that we still have a long way to travel in our journey to attain that supreme state.

You must always strive to destroy all unwholesome thoughts in your mind. Always strive to eradicate passion, hatred, and delusion. If a person does not have this goal in his heart, he always dwells longing for superficial and futile things.

Inferior qualities cannot be eradicated by an inferior mind. This can only be done with a powerful and trained mind. Passion, hatred and delusion can only be eradicated if one strictly strives to establish oneself in the idea, "I truly want to eradicate these defilements." In order to have that strong wish in one's heart, one must first learn the Four Noble Truths, contemplate them, and relate them to one's own life. That is the beginning of this journey.

If one is to learn the Noble Truths and relate them to one's life, then one must first learn this Noble Dhamma. In order to learn this Dhamma, one must associate with kalyāṇamittas who teach that Dhamma. So without a kalyāṇamitta, would this journey even be possible?

Would you be able to complete this journey if you leave Mahamevnāwa? People may say, "There is a beautiful cabin in that area," "The forest in this area is very beautiful," "Food is available in plenty in that village," and they may say, "You can easily meditate in that certain place." But, when you hear those things, you must quickly recollect, "Association with Kalyāṇamittas, listening to the Noble Dhamma, wise consideration, and practicing the Dhamma are the four essential components of the path to Nibbāna." Without these four, there is no path to Nibbāna.

Without these four factors, there is no way of attaining the fruits and paths in the path to Nibbāna. So you must clearly understand the value of association with kalyāṇamittas and remember that at Mahamevnāwa you have the maximum opportunity for that association.

### **How does one lose this association with kalyāṇamittas?**

One loses the gift of association with kalyāṇamittas due to procrastination. Now imagine that one gains the opportunity to associate with kalyāṇamittas. But instead of taking advantage of it, he procrastinates and delays practicing the Dhamma. And without him even knowing, he becomes imprudently blinded by superficial things. Therefore, it is vital that we develop diligence in us.

### How does one become diligent?

First, we must recognize the difference between wholesome and unwholesome deeds. Then, we must be diligent in developing wholesome deeds and eradicate unwholesome deeds. This quality {being diligent} only develops in those who are in the company of kalyāṇamittas.

#### Read – Kalyāṇamitta Sutta (SN 3:18)

**“O meritorious King, when you are in the company of kalyāṇamittas and noble companions and when you tend to constantly associate with kalyāṇamittas, you must develop this one quality within you: the quality of being diligent in developing wholesome deeds.”**

The person who is diligent in doing wholesome actions is the person who is wise.

Hence, you too should strive to be a wise person. If at some point you clash with advice given to you, then you clash with the kalyāṇamitta who advised you. If at some point you reject an advice given to you, then you reject that kalyāṇamitta who directed you. If you throw away that advice, then you throw away that kalyāṇamitta who guided you. And if that happens to you, you become a very unfortunate person. You must not wish that even on an enemy.

If you remain in the association of kalyāṇamittas, then you have arrived at the first step towards becoming a wise person. However, if you delay this association, you will not be able to travel any further in this path to Nibbāna. Can you say otherwise?

If one rejects and ignores advice given to him, then he is a person who procrastinates in this path to Nibbāna. You may ask why. It is because advice is there to help you develop what is wholesome and abandon what is unwholesome. Therefore, think, **“I will take delight in advice given.”**

Let’s look at a simile. Now suppose that we have fallen sick. In such a circumstance, will we refuse to take medication that will help cure us of the illness? We wouldn’t refuse, would we? We wouldn’t refuse because we want to recover from the illness. In the same way, we must realize that we are suffering from a disease of the mind. The disease of passion, hatred and delusion. And if we are to recover from this disease, we must take the essential medication called advice.

If one accepts harsh advice more heartily than gentle advice then he is a person who quickly advances on this path to Nibbāna. Why is that so? It is because advice is given strongly to protect a person from having to face a very dangerous downfall. And if that person takes delight in that strong advice, that means he uses that advice to save himself from a great danger.

Look at it this way. For what reason does a driver apply brakes very strongly in a vehicle? The driver brakes strongly to prevent a big accident. When the driver brakes strongly,

it becomes uncomfortable for the passengers, but will the passengers blame the driver for his action if they know that he did it to prevent an accident? No, the passengers would not. They will praise the driver saying, “He is a good driver. He saved us.”

In the same way, strong advice is given to save someone from a big danger. However, if a person dislikes advice then he tries to keep away from the kalyāṇamitta who gave advice. And ultimately, he comes to dislike even the Supreme Buddha’s noble advice. Would a person who dislikes advice in general take delight in the Supreme Buddha’s advice? Of course he will not because the Supreme Buddha’s teachings are filled with advice. Therefore, we must learn to welcome advice.

### **Another good way of practicing to take delight in being advised**

We come to dislike advice because we are blinded by unwholesome things. So we must learn to be free from unwholesome thoughts and actions. In order to do this, we must first practice recollecting the good qualities of kalyāṇamittas.

Think frequently as follows in the form of a meditation.

**“My kalyāṇamittas have compassion towards me. They are the people who advise me. Indeed, having such kalyāṇamittas is a great advantage for me. It is a great benefit for me.”**

If one recollects the good qualities of kalyāṇamittas in this way, one’s mind does not establish in unwholesome states. The mind establishes within oneself. The mind concentrates inwards, towards oneself.

**(Nandiya Sutta – AN 11.13)**

A person who thinks in this way always expects and waits to hear advice from kalyāṇamittas, just as an infant longs for a mother’s affection. And just as an infant receives that affection from a mother, a person who is in the company of kalyāṇamittas receives help to develop himself. The association with kalyāṇamittas is an amazing and invaluable asset.

That is why the Supreme Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda, **“This Sāsana solely rests on kalyāṇamittas.”** If someone feels that they can do this on their own then that person lets go of this Sāsana. The person, who lets go of this sāsana, lets go of Nibbāna because the only objective of a Sambuddha Sāsana is liberation from birth, decay and death.

So you must always remember that this Sambuddha Sāsana rests solely on the kalyāṇamitta. We keep reiterating this point only out of compassion towards you. In the past, there were people who lost this treasure of association with kalyāṇamittas. Our wish is that you will not make that same mistake!

Some people may say, “This is not the way; you must lead a solitary life in order to practice this path.” Here, they are advising you to give up the company of kalyāṇamittas. That person who advises you in this way may be an elderly and famous person. But do not take it as

good advice. No matter what others may say, you should always be in the association of kalyāṇamittas. Without that association, there is no path to Nibbana.

Therefore, be diligent and develop wholesome thoughts and actions. Only then can you reach that ultimate liberation. And always remember: attaining that supreme state is only possible for those who remain in the association of kalyāṇamittas.





**Let us not clash with advice!**

You must try your best to bear this advice well in mind and put these words into practice. However, be sure not to perceive practicing this advice as being similar to selecting one's attire throughout a busy day. In the ordinary world, the moment we feel that the clothes we are wearing no longer suits us, we throw them away and wear a new ones. But you should not practice this advice given to you in the same way. You must try to embody this advice.

It is difficult to think of anything more detrimental to us than clashing with advice or with the person giving advice. If this quality of clashing exists in us or arises in us it will be disastrous for ourselves as well as others.

Therefore, keep this in mind in a way that you will never forget. If a person holds this point in one's mind strongly, then he will only succeed from there. No harm will come upon him.

If you become skilled in learning not to be in conflict with advice or the person giving advice, then without a doubt you will only succeed in your journey to Nibbāna. However, if you always clash with advice or the person giving advice, then it will be impossible for you to succeed in your journey to Nibbāna.

This is why we always ask you to think in this way: **"I will take delight in advice given to me," and, "May I be advised very frequently."**

There is nothing more beneficial to a person's self progress than advice. But unfortunately, as human beings we tend to take advice in the wrong way That is, we do not take advice to our advantage by following it.

However, if one day you decide to take delight in advice and use it for your advantage, then that is the day you will begin your road to success. On the contrary, if one day you clash with advice and show your reluctance to accept, then that is the day your downfall will begin.

As monks, we now have a bigger responsibility than what we had as laymen. If as a layman, we made a mistake, then the consequences of that mistake may have only affected our immediate family and sometimes it may not have affected anyone at all. But now, we have entered into the Sambuddha Sāsana. And if we were to do something wrong now, the consequences of that action would affect everyone, including both divine and human beings.



Just one irresponsible person's wrongful speech and actions may lead many others to wind up in hell.

{It is to avoid such dangerous circumstances} that we lead a brahmacariya life (pure life). Such a life helps us restraint our sense faculties, eradicate defilements and ultimately be liberated. Without a well restrained life, eradicating passion, hatred and delusion and attaining that ultimate liberation will not be possible.

That is why we must first practice to control and restraint our sense faculties well. We must learn to continuously practice this. What can possibly help us in practicing this difficult task? Only advice!

It is advice from a kalyāṇamitta that helps us conquer this difficult task. Self discipline begins with advice. In the absence of advice, there is no room for self discipline.

As long as disobedience persists, achieving Samadhi, attaining stages of realization and liberation from this saṃsāra will not be possible in this world.

If a person takes delight in advice and happily follows it, then it is in such a person that the tendency to be disobedient gradually fades away. To advise is to direct a person, "do this, do not do that." The quality of obedience develops in a person who happily follows this advice. Such a person fully abandons the tendency to be disobedient and becomes well disciplined.

To be disciplined is to well control one's actions and speech and well restrain one's mind. When one is disciplined, fuel no longer exists to feed the five hindrances. As a result, the negative effects caused by the five hindrances disappear.

Suppose there is a famous troublemaker in a village. When he gets drunk, he gets involved in fights and creates trouble. Now, imagine that someone in the village prohibits and prevents him from drinking alcohol. Instantly, that troublemaker's tendency to get into fights and arguments disappears. This is because the fuel that fed this type of behavior was alcohol and when he was deprived of alcohol, that troublesome behavior stopped, resulting in a peaceful environment for the villagers.

Similarly, the five hindrances fuel unwholesome states such as the sense of self-importance, pride, rebelliousness and ego within us. As a result of these unwholesome qualities we speak rough and harsh words to others. All of this happens when our mind becomes restless as a direct effect of the five hindrances.

When fuel that feeds the five hindrances is no longer present, then at that point the five hindrances gradually weaken. As a result, a person's mind becomes delighted. With such a state of mind, the five hindrances become easily suppressed and it becomes very easy for a person to engage in meditation. When the mind is calm, the object of meditation establishes in the mind effortlessly.

As he continues to meditate in a relaxed state, he feels joy. With a joyful mind, his body becomes tranquil. With a tranquil body, he achieves a concentrated mind. When his mind is highly concentrated, understanding of the Four Noble Truths arises. Through that understanding, he attains the knowledge of see things as they really are: This is form, this is the arising of form, this is the cessation of form etc. Similarly for the rest of the five aggregates. This is called “true understanding.”

Such a person realizes the futility of this worldly life. Therefore, he becomes unattached. He eradicates passion and becomes liberated. But from where did he start this journey? He began this journey by learning to take delight in advice and putting that advice into practice.

It is impossible to jump over the wall of a big fortress. One can only enter through the door. Similarly, one cannot jump over walls to enter the dispensation of the Supreme Buddha. It can be entered only through the designated door. That designated door is called, “listening to advice.” Once a person learns to take delight in advice that door opens immediately.

However, that advice he receives may be gentle and sweet at times and bitter and rough at other times. Every so often those words of advice may even feel like whiplashes. But the person who likes advice does not assess the nature of advice. He happily accepts it, knowing that it is for his benefit.

It only takes one person who loathes advice to create a group of vicious and corrupted people, just as it only takes a very short period of time for germs to spread throughout the world causing large scale damage. On the contrary, good things spread quietly and slowly. A person who loathes advice turns into a vicious person. And just like mosquitoes breed easily in a dirty pit, one corrupt person breeds many more of the same kind.

If that becomes a reality, then it is like a dark cloud covering the beautiful sun called Mahamevnāwa. Such dark clouds hovered over Mahamevnāwa in the past. All this effort to advise you in this way is put forth to prevent the re-emergence of such dark clouds in the future.

If such corrupt people emerge in the future, then the damage caused will be destructive. So try not to become a dark cloud that covers this beautiful sun that dawned on the Sambuddha Sāsana. Strive to be obedient as long as you live. If we become dark clouds in this Sāsana, then Lokuswaminwahanse will no longer want to continue this invaluable work. He will feel, “There’s no point to this,” and put an end to his efforts.

If one learns to welcome advice happily, then he learns to welcome advice of the Supreme Buddha with delight (Buddhist discourses are filled with advice). We must not treat even a single verse of Dhamma as being plain and simple. We must learn to treat the Noble Dhamma as highly powerful and supreme. We must consider this Dhamma to be the most profound words of this world.

Why should we learn to perceive it in that way? It is because this Noble Dhamma is Svākkhāto (it is well proclaimed). Nothing needs to be corrected in this Dhamma and nothing can be discarded on the basis that it is too plain and simple (if one understands this quality, then he achieves Samma Ditti— right view). This is why we must hold dear the advice we receive and use that noble advice to discipline ourselves.

Just look at the beauty of discipline. Even king Chandasoka {tyrannical Asoka} turned into Dharmashoka {Asoka of the Dhamma} just by seeing the serene behavior of young bhikkhu, Venerable Nigrodha. The pleasant mind that arose from that serene view helped sustain this Sambuddha Sāsana to this day. Even today, people are pleased when they see a well disciplined life. Now do you understand the importance of self discipline? Self discipline develops within a person who takes delight in advice.

Our internal thoughts cannot be seen from the outside. The external world only sees our outward behavior. Reserved and well controlled behavior arises in those who take delight in being advised. So, as long as you live, you must always strive to **never be undisciplined** because even a small lapse in discipline in any one of us can cause a great disaster to the world, just as when a sewer overflows in a city.

So do not clash with advice. Think of it as something sweet and pleasant. Frequently recollect, **“My kalyāṇamittas have compassion towards me. They are the people who advise me. They only want to see my progress.”** Only then, will we enjoy the association with kalyāṇamittas. We must learn to enjoy that association so that we do not clash with their compassionate advice.

In certain dark places, there grow plants. And those plants always bend towards the direction of sunlight. They always seek sunlight. In the same way, we must try to seek the association of kalyāṇamittas. But keep in mind that we will only seek that association if we truly know in our hearts, **“My kalyāṇamittas are truly compassionate. They only wish to see my progress.”** So in order to embed that idea in our hearts, we must first learn to frequently recollect that thought. Only then can we hold it deep in our hearts.

When a tree growing under dark conditions bends towards the direction of the sun, what does it receive? It receives sunlight. When it receives light, that tree grows healthier, greener and stronger. With time, that tree becomes a resource for many people.

In the same way, from the moment a person becomes inclined to association with kalyāṇamittas, he begins to receive advice. That advice makes him mentally strong, powerful and well nourished. And with time, he becomes someone who lives for the benefit of many people.

Back to the simile of the tree. Is the mild sunlight that falls on the plant only in the morning and evening sufficient for a tree's optimal growth? No, it isn't. The strong radiant light that shines during the afternoon is also required. Only then, can the plant grow beautifully.

Similarly, we need to be given both gentle and rough advice. Why is that so? It is something like this: suppose there is a vehicle. A vehicle on the road always needs to be under the driver's control. In order to control the speed of that vehicle, that driver may need to break gently at times and strongly at other times. However, when the driver breaks with force, it may feel uncomfortable to the passengers, but, the driver saves them from a having serious accident.

In the same way, when we are about to face a serious danger, our kalyāṇamitta advises us rather roughly. Otherwise, we fall into a serious danger. It is for the same reason that we say we need to be given both rough and gentle advice. Only then will we become well trained.

Back to the simile of the tree. If that tree, growing in that dark place does not bend in search of sunlight, then that plant's leaves turn yellow. The plant itself gets discolored and become malnourished. No further growth occurs in that plant and it no longer becomes a resource to anyone.

So do not be disobedient. Strive to become a person who does not clash with advice. Advice only benefits us. Clashing and opposing them will only cause us to face a great misfortune. **So determine to never become an heir to that misfortune.** Discard the word "misfortune" completely from your life.





### **The Blessed One's most compassionate advice**

We have taught you many things about advice by now. Advice is something that directly helps us nourish and develop our lives. Without such advice and guidance, we have no way of steering our life in the right direction. Advice and proper guidance is an essential factor for a successful life.

However, the ordinary world does not take advice as something pleasant. And as individuals who lived in that ordinary world {before ordination}, we still have that habit of clashing with advice. The ordinary mind perceives advice as something rough and unpleasant. Why is that? It is because advice is given to motivate us to stop or let go of wrongful actions. Advice directs us to, “Do this, do not do that” pointing out the dangers of certain wrong habits. It motivates us to get rid of our bad habits and trains us to be free from unwholesome thoughts.

Letting go of anything is not easy. In fact, it is the hardest thing to do in this world. Advice motivates and trains us to do that highly difficult task. The ordinary mind wants to cling, not to let go. But advice directs us to let go of our clinging. This is the reason why our mind resists and clashes with advice. Now, can you imagine how much wisdom we would need to learn to take delight in advice?

That is why we say, if a person clash with advice then he digs himself a hole that leads to his own demise. A person who clashes with advice loses someone special in his life. He loses a kalyāṇamitta. How does he lose a kalyāṇamitta? Well, a kalyāṇamitta becomes a part of our life, only if we incorporate their advice into our lives. If we come to refuse their advice, then in turn we come to refuse that association with kalyāṇamittas.

We also taught you that if at one point you refuse and clashes with advice, then at that point, you let go of this Noble Dhamma. Why did we say that? Because the Supreme Buddha's Dhamma consists entirely of advice. The Supreme Buddha's Dhamma directs us to let go of our clinging. As a result, if some day we come to dislike advice then on that day, we also come to dislike the Noble Dhamma proclaimed by the Supreme Buddha.

We must think about our own well-being and strive to always do meritorious deeds. We must learn to accept advice delightedly and relate them to our own lives. If we don't have a delighted mind, then we come to refuse advice. A person who wishes to advance in this path {to Nibbāna} must take delight in being advised often.

Take a look at this sutta:

(AN- 3.125 – Gotamaka Cetiya Sutta)

**“On one occasion, the Blessed One was staying at the Gotamaka shrine. There, the Blessed One addressed the monks and said, “Oh Bhikkhus! I teach the Dhamma after understanding it through a special knowledge. Not without understanding through a special knowledge. Oh Bhikkhus, it’s with a cause that I teach the Dhamma. Not without a cause. Oh Bhikkhus! I teach the Dhamma with marvels. Not without marvels”**

**“Oh Bhikkhus, because I teach the Dhamma after understanding it through a special knowledge, not without understanding through a special knowledge , because it is with a cause that I teach the Dhamma not without a cause, and because I teach the Dhamma with marvels and not without marvels, you must accept my advice and follow my guidance.”**

You can now see the real nature of this Noble Dhamma proclaimed by the Supreme Buddha. No one can point out any error or incompleteness in it. It is to emphasize this extraordinary quality of the Noble Dhamma that the Supreme Buddha teaches us these three factors.

The Supreme Buddha shows that it is with a special knowledge that he teaches this Dhamma, not without a special knowledge. It is with a cause that the Blessed One teaches this Dhamma, not without a cause. It is with marvels that the Supreme Buddha teaches this Dhamma, not without marvels. After stating this once, the Blessed One repeats it and emphasizes the same point repeatedly to show that advice and guidance given in this way by a Supreme Buddha must be accepted and followed.

**“Oh Bhikkhus, you can be happy. You can form a joyful and pleasant mind knowing that the Supreme Buddha is Sammāsambuddho (Self Awakened), the Dhamma is Svākkhāto (well proclaimed) and the community of Sangha is Supatipanno (they are on the correct path to eradicate Passion, Hatred and Delusion).”**

Just look at how fortunate we are. If we take this Dhamma deep into our hearts, then it becomes very easy for us to find true happiness. If we can have a pleasant mind about these suttas, then we can put an end to this long journey of saṃsāra. It is for this reason the Supreme Buddha explained the nature of this Noble Dhamma. What is the nature of advice and guidance given by our great teacher? Its nature is that it is proclaimed with a special knowledge, it is

proclaimed with a cause and it is proclaimed with marvels. Therefore, we must accept and follow that advice.

Because we are fortunate to be alive during the time of a Sambuddha Sāsana, we are blessed to have the opportunity to know of such a Great Teacher. We are blessed enough to know the doctrine and the community of disciples of such a Supreme Teacher. So we can always feel delighted by recollecting these qualities: the Supreme Buddha is Sammāsambuddho. The Noble Dhamma is Svākkhāto and the community of Sangha is Supatipanno.

If you do not reflect on these qualities, then you will end up thinking about futile things which can result in baseless fears and concerns. The Supreme Buddha has clearly taught us how to enter this noble path of Dhamma. Therefore, all we need to do is to take our time and learn this Dhamma well, even if it means that we have to devote our whole life to it. If we rush through it, instead of taking the time to learn this properly, then advancing in this path will be impossible.

Studying the Dhamma does not mean just memorizing or speed reading. Sometimes it can take up to one or two years to finish reading a single book. But what is important is to hold this Dhamma deeply in our minds. That is what is called “learning” the Dhamma.

It is not absolutely essential to memorize the Dhamma in order to understand it. Memorization is an extraordinary quality that can be seen only in some individuals. But what is essential is to first have a pleasant mind about the Noble Dhamma. We can develop such a pleasant mind when we read and listen to the Dhamma and when we engage in Dhamma discussions. So instead of wanting to quickly finish reading, read this Noble Dhamma with the intention of understanding it.

Each of these suttas explains as to how we can direct our mind to realize the Dhamma. If we become accomplished in this task then we come one step closer to being free from this saṃsāra.

In this great sutta, the Supreme Buddha clearly states, “O monks, my advice and guidance must be followed.” But keep in mind that we will only come to accept and follow such advice if we accept the advice of a kalyāṇamitta. Why? Because a kalyāṇamitta teaches us the same advice found in these discourses.

Advice asks us to, “Do this, do not do that,” and thereby teaches us to restraint our sense faculties. Such advice includes: do not behave in a way that disturbs others; do not form inferior relationships, instead cultivate the association with kalyāṇamittas. Such advice is given in order to help us practice this Dhamma.

We are told not to develop inferior relationships and instead to cultivate the association with kalyāṇamittas. When we get such advice, we must know in our hearts that this advice is given for our own good. When we think in this way, our mind starts to accept the Dhamma. When a person accepts the Dhamma, he happily accepts and follows advice given. And in turn, he becomes someone who accepts and follows the advice of the Supreme Buddha.

This however is a very difficult task. Why is it difficult? It is difficult because this mind is not compliant and well-trained. It is stubborn and inflexible. Even though we always try to beautify our external appearance, our inside is not as beautiful. This mind is the same as a beautifully designed bathroom. It may look beautiful from the outside, but inside is filled with urine and feces. In the same way, a person may look beautiful from the outside, but if we tap into his internal thoughts, we may find that his mind is in a very unwholesome state (this applies only for a person who has not purified his mind). Compared to this impure mind, this body is at least a little bit cleaner.

The normal tendency of this mind is to be stubborn and willful. But that tendency starts to disappear when a person develops a pleasant mind about this Noble Dhamma. When one develops a pleasant mind, the mind starts to become tamed. This is why you must frequently recollect, “The Supreme Buddha has taught us everything for our own well being.” When you recollect that thought repeatedly, you start to have a pleasant mind about the Dhamma. You must learn to nourish your life with such advice and guidance. Only then can you advance in this path. Your progress can only develop within yourself.

If you realize that it is you yourself who can lead to your own success, then you will not rush through this path unnecessary. Always remember that success can be achieved only by yourself and advice is there to help you do just that.

On the contrary, a person who does not realize that success can only be achieved by oneself may feel that one’s success is determined by the external world. He imprudently believes that it is the external world that leads to his success. When a person thinks in this way, he automatically begins to reject advice.

So you must contemplate these points deeply and strive to form a pleasant mind about the Supreme Buddha’s discourses. It is not easy to take delight in advice. Sometimes advice may be harsh in nature. Sometimes, you may even feel uncomfortable by certain advice because advice asks us to let go of things we like {{wrongful things we cling to}}. So if one is to follow that advice then one has to make a sacrifice. Letting go is a sacrifice because when we give up something we like, we sacrifice the pleasure we get from it. So you must start to practice this difficult task. Only then can we make our life successful while also being of help to others.



At present, we receive advice, but someday we will also have to give advice. But we must be properly trained to do that. In order to give advice, we must become people who are worthy of giving advice. If we are worthy of giving advice and are well trained, then we will be able to do this task successfully. **One important point you must keep in mind is that when you advise someone your mind must never be influenced by the four wrong courses (desire, hatred, fear and delusion). You should not advise someone if you feel that your advice is motivated by these four wrong courses.**

For an example, suppose there is a person we really like. We may feel the need to advise him because we want to see him become a better person. As a result, we end up advising and giving guidance to him very frequently. We even end up teaching him the Noble Dhamma more regularly. This is what is called taking the “wrong course” through “desire.” {When you are in this wrong course} you feel the need to advise that person quite often and you end up taking the time to teach him the most trivial things. When this happens, you must reflect on your actions and question yourself, “What am I really doing?”

Giving advice is not an easy task. And if we end up advising others based on desire, then it causes harm to ourselves as well as others. From the outside, it may appear as if we are just giving advice. In our own mind, we may think that ourselves. But without awareness, we end up cultivating unwholesome thoughts in our mind. We must understand this well and always question, “What motivates me to give advice,” “Do I give advice based on desire?”

Similarly, hatred is one of the four wrong courses. Suppose there’s a person we dislike. Regardless of what he does, we always find his flaws. This motivates us to advise him. We constantly pay attention to him to find his faults and advise him frequently: “Do it this way, do not do it that way.” Can’t this happen in our lives?

Of course, it can happen. When it happens, you must ask yourself, “Why do I advise him so often?” When you question in this way you will realize, “Oh, I advise him often because I do not get along with him.” So you must take precaution not to advise others based on hatred. The same principal applies to fear and delusion the third and fourth wrong courses. It may be very difficult, but we must strive to advise others without being influenced by these four wrong courses.

If you look at the ordinary world, most advice is motivated by these four wrong courses. It may appear as if we are advising another out of compassion, but in reality we do so because we are influenced by the four wrong courses. If the same thing happens in the life of a monk, it can have a negative impact on everyone.

So how do we advise others without being affected by these four wrong courses? Based on what factors should we advise others? Our advice should be motivated by the four sublime states: mettā, karunā, muditā, and upekkhā (loving-friendliness, kindness, appreciative joy, and

equanimity). Our advice must be based on the four sublime states and not be influenced by the four wrong courses.

If one day you advise someone, then be sure that you only advise in this way. If you advise in the wrong way, then it can be harmful to both yourself and others.

But when we establish our mind in the four sublime states and advise others without being influenced by the four wrong courses, then the root of our advice becomes compassion and kindness. Such advice helps cultivate wholesome thoughts and eradicate unwholesome thoughts.

One point you must keep in mind when giving advice is that if someone has criticized and complained about, then in such a circumstance you should not go to give advice. Here, I'm not referring to anonymous rumors or gossip, but rather, criticism and complaints that have been made with a rational reason. If we go to advise others while being under such a situation, then our advice may not be perceived as credible. A person under such a circumstance is not worthy of giving advice until the complaint is dealt with. So we must make sure that we are worthy of giving advice before we start to do so.

In addition, when you give advice to others, make sure that they have the tendency to respect and accept your advice. If they do not have this quality, then do not advise them.

Another point you must remember is that when you are in a monastery such as this one, you must first check whether you have permission to advise others. If you do not have permission, then you should not give advice. Advising without permission may give rise to unnecessary conflicts.

Also, keep in mind that, if a problem or special issue comes up while you are staying at a certain monastery, then that matter should be brought to the attention of the Sanghoupastayaka Bhante of that monastery (the monk who supports the rest of the monks.) That is the best way to direct advice to a person in need of guidance. Do not try to take it upon yourself to advise others because that may not be in sync with the disciplining system there. Make sure you remember these points well. I bless you, "May you cultivate a mind that will always take delight in advice!"





### Hazards coming in the guise of advice!

Recognizing dangers that come our way is a very difficult task. Here, dangers refer to threats that we may face when practicing the path to Nibbāna. Do you agree with that statement? If it was easy to recognize these dangers then wouldn't this path to Nibbāna be very easy? It is very difficult to recognize these - that is why we must at least learn to avoid them. In order to avoid dangers, we must learn to live in the association of kalyāṇamittas. There is no other alternative.

When we are in the association of kalyāṇamittas we get advice and guidance. **Through that advice, a kalyāṇamitta comes to be an important part of our life.** As a result, we come to like being advised because we come to enjoy that association.

However, be aware that there are people who may advise you with the sole intention of separating you from the company of kalyāṇamittas. This is one danger that comes in the guise of advice. {If we imprudently accept such advice} then we come to lose the association with kalyāṇamittas which can be very harmful to us.

Have you seen how loving parents bring up their children safely in their homes? When the children go outside of the house, maybe to the city, they carefully teach them: "This is the road you must follow. There are thieves on the way. These are the people who are loyal and trustworthy. These are the people who are not. These people may pretend to be friendly but they really are not." Why do parents give advice like this? It is because the world outside the home is filled with hazards and dangers.

In the same way, we try to protect you from dangers while you are here in Mahamevnāwa. There are many dangers ahead of us and we may have to face anyone of them at any moment.

#### **Here's one big danger:**

These dangers do exist in this world. In the past, certain people became victim to these dangers. As a result they lost the association with kalyāṇamittas. You too can fall into these dangers if you are not aware of them.

- Some people tried to be friends with monks here to use them for their advantage.
- Others became friends with monks here and took them away to build monasteries of their own.

- Some people promised to teach suttas to monks here. But when they went, they were told that they must first become a part of their group and only thereafter will suttas be taught to them.

Because of such dangers, many lost the opportunity to associate with kalyāṇamittas.

What you must become aware of is that these friendly advances come in the guise of advice. If a person helps us in some way and puts the precondition that we must first join his group in order to continue the friendship, then we must quickly realize that we are about to face a big danger.

Look at this simile of the mice. Do you know how people catch mice? Do they set the mouse trap and tell the mouse, “Oh dear mouse, here is a mouse trap.” Of course not! They put a piece of coconut in the trap. Not just any coconut, a toasted coconut that gives an attractive aroma. But that mouse does not even get the chance to enjoy that smell. He quickly gets caught to the trap. So what makes you think that we won’t fall into traps in the same way?

**Think in this way:**

↪ “I came here to Mahamevnāwa because there’s something truly valuable to be gained here.” You came here because this is the place to understand the Dhamma. Did you get that message from anywhere else? You probably did not. How did we get that message? We got that message by reading books from Mahamevnāwa publications and coming to a certain understanding. What was that understanding? Like never before we realized, “This is the right place to fully understand the Dhamma. This is the place that will help me realize the Dhamma.”

If you recall, in the past we were just ordinary boys who were attached to our cell phones and enjoying sensual pleasures. It was during that time that we came to hear this pure Dhamma. When we heard it, we realized, “Oh dear, aren’t we drowning in a sewer?” We realized, “We have sunk right up to our nose by now, if we stay here any longer, we will fully drown.” So you renounced the household life and came here. This realization that we were living in an unwholesome environment} only arose because of Mahamevnāwa.

Having come here in this way, if someone gives you the message, “This is not the place to realize the Dhamma, it is somewhere else,” then do not believe it. Even if your own father tells you that, do not believe it. Whether you get this message from a person inside or outside of Mahamevnāwa, do not believe it because it is a big danger in the guise of advice.

↪ If someone from the outside comes and says something that is contradictory to what the Sanghoupastayaka Bhante says in terms of the Dhamma, then do not take it as advice. In such a circumstance, be very careful! They may say these things in a very compassionate and gentle way. But keep in mind that the wolf can come disguised in sheep’s skin. But those who are inside are not wolves.

Please do not misunderstand what I am trying to say. If there is something valuable enough to be taken in that external advice then take it. But do not become attached to that advice or the person giving advice. Similarly, do not clash with advice. It is like this: If a thug comes and offers you a chocolate bar then take it. But don't get caught by him. If you don't feel safe, then do not eat the chocolate, but you can at least make use of the wrapper. But be aware that the person who gave you the chocolate is a dangerous person.

When external people tell you these things, they may sound very compassionate. They may even tell you directly, "I am telling you these things because of my affection for you." They may even cry in front of you and say, "How can I not tell you these things?" But do not get caught by those crocodile tears. They may even call you "Son" which may give you the idea that they are so compassionate towards you. But do not be deceived!

We are not faced with dangers every single day. But keep in mind that it only takes a few seconds for us to face a danger. So always be mindful of dangers that come in the guise of advice.

We advise you in this way because of the fear that you may be caught off guard in this Sambuddha Sāsana. Outside of this dispensation, there are countless dangers. Think about the protection you have gained inside Mahamevnāwa. So strive to be free from dangers that come in the guise of advice. If at any point, you are unsure about any advice you receive then consult with the Sanghoupastayaka Bhante. You can ask, "Venerable Bhante, someone advised me in this way. What should I do?"

Another piece of advice...



Even if it is the advice of the Sanghoupastayake Bhante, make sure that you compare it to the Dhamma before following it. Neither clash nor accept advice. Always compare it with the Dhamma. And keep in mind that if you feel advice given {by the Sanghoupastayake Bhante} is not appropriate then do not hesitate to tell Lokuswaminwahanse.

Even what we say here, you must first compare it to the Dhamma and see for yourself. You have the complete freedom to do that. And if you feel that our advice is in contradiction to the Dhamma then you must speak to us directly. But keep in mind that some of the examples we use here cannot be found in suttas because these are just ordinary advice. We are trying to use this advice to direct you to suttas.

So do not try to find these examples in suttas and tell yourself, "Oh, these examples are not to be found in suttas," and end up discarding this advice. If that happens, then you will lose the true essence of this advice. But do not try to make up examples either. Always keep in mind that if someone gives you an inappropriate advice, you have the freedom to tell Lokuswaminwahanse regardless of who gave that advice.

If you take this advice deep into your heart and practice them well, then you can become a newly bloomed flower in the tree called “Mahamevnāwa” which has grown embracing this great earth. Then, from that flower, you can become a sweet fruit. A sweet fruit consists of healthy seeds. And those healthy seeds have the potential to give rise to another beautiful tree. Such a person benefits both divine and human beings.





### **Get rid of unwanted fears**

We hear in the Suttas, “When we contemplate that this eye is impermanent then we attain arahantship.” So thinking that we can do the same, we struggle to attain arahantship. But what we do not know is that there are innumerable obstacles we can face when travelling on the path to Nibbāna. These obstacles are very difficult even to understand. Just one of those small obstacles is enough to push us away from the path. So we must try to understand them.

Everyone does not face the same kind of problems. They vary from person to person. If a person forms a pleasant mind about the Dhamma then at that moment he does not form a pleasant mind about unworthy things. He indeed forms a pleasant mind about something that does deserve having a pleasant mind about. This only happens if a person practices the Four Establishments of Mindfulness where his mind becomes rejuvenated. With a rejuvenated mind, he is able to realize the Dhamma. But that rejuvenated nature of the mind can be lost because of something very minor. Something as trivial as an illness, an idea, or just a word has the potential to weaken our mind.

Similarly, another factor which throws us off the path and weakens mind is “unwanted fear.” This unwanted fear is unwholesome in its nature. Many take this in the wrong way. They think that having unwanted fear is a sign that we “honour and respect others.” But it is only an unwholesome thought that comes disguised as respect.

There are two types of fears:-

#### **1. The fear we should carefully preserve within us**

Unfortunately, many have gotten rid of this fear just like getting rid of spit in our mouth. That fear is the fear of evil deeds and the fear of doing unwholesome things. But this fear is something we should hold onto because it protects us. But for many people this “fear” is only made out of glass. It breaks instantly.

Having this fear within us is one of the five strengths of a trainee (pañca sekha bala). This arises in those who develop confidence in the Supreme Buddha. It arises as a result of wise consideration. It arises in those who pay gratitude, in those who think about the suffering that arises due to unwholesome things, in those who contemplate the dangers of this saṃsara and in those who contemplate on the Four Noble Truths. And finally, it arises in those who live with mutual respect.

The next fear:

## **2. The fear we should get rid of**

The fear we should get rid of is the fear we have for advice, the person giving advice and the fear we have for people who actually helps us. We must get rid of this fear because it arises as a result of delusion, unwise consideration and having an inferiority complex. It arises in those who do not show gratitude.

If this fear exists within us, then our mind does not develop any further. Why is that? It is because this Dhamma can only be understood by a mind that is free from the five hindrances. The person who is frightened has a restless mind. He jumps from one thought to another, thinking, “Will he blame me? Will he hit me?” When he thinks in this way he starts to feel regret. Therefore, his mind does not become calm. Without a calmed mind, he is unable to be mindful. Without mindfulness, he is unable to restraint his sense faculties and it becomes harder for him to protect precepts. When he breaks precepts he becomes even more regretful.

Therefore, you must get rid of unnecessary fears and develop the fear that is needed. If a person gets rid of the fear that is required and develops unwanted fears then he continues to be an untrue person. If we continue to be untrue people, then we may become the cause of fear for others. Because that fear is very dangerous the Supreme Buddha proclaimed, “If a fear arises in this world, it arises because of the untrue person.”

If this unnecessary fear persists within us then we won’t be able to achieve real success. Consider this simile. Suppose there is a beautiful flower filled with nectar. But if the bee does not find the flower attractive and if it is scared of the flower then would that bee ever visit that flower? No, it wouldn’t. The moment it sees the flower, it will turn around and run away. That bee will never taste the nectar of that flower.

Unwanted fear is considered unwholesome. Respect is considered wholesome. From respect arise physical, verbal and mental actions based on loving-kindness. This is a natural phenomenon. And based on those factors, the following qualities arise: confidence in the Noble Triple Gem, fear of doing unwholesome things, and shame of doing unwholesome things as well as determination and wisdom. When a person encompasses those factors he observes precepts wisely.

And one day he comes to the realization, “This is what is wholesome and this is what is unwholesome.” The ability to recognize the difference between wholesome and unwholesome things is what is known as the “right view.” We must strive hard to reach this stage.

But where did we start? We started this process by getting rid of unwanted fears and cultivating the necessary fear. Think about this. If you are scared of Lokuswaminwahanse and



others who help you, would you ever tell them if you encounter a problem? Of course you would not.

Then **how should one get rid of unwanted fears? One can do this only by recollecting the good qualities of the kalyāṇamittas.** As a result of doing this he develops respect for them. Then, regardless of whether the person who advises him is close by, he develops physical, verbal and mental actions based on loving-kindness. Whether he is with Lokuswaminwahanse or not, he happily follows Lokuswaminwahanse's advice. True respect develops within such people.

Even if he becomes unmindful he quickly regains his mindfulness and recollects, "Lokuswaminwahanse revived this Sambuddha Sāsana and created Mahamevnāwa with great difficulty. So we must protect what Lokuswaminwahanse has created." Thinking in this way, he tries his best to control his sense faculties.

If a person thinks in this way, then that is the best thought that arises in his mind. So we must learn to think like this because it helps us be respectful towards those that help us. Such people do not have inferior wishes such as, "Oh Lokuswaminwahanse will greet me with a smile today."

Do not have these inferior expectations. Reflect in this way: "Don't I have a place to stay, don't I get alms, and don't I receive books, all because of the help of Lokuswaminwahanse?"

Let us go back and recollect what we discussed. What was the reason behind having unnecessary fears? The reason was thinking about faults of others such as: "He is harsh to me, he blames me, and he only finds my flaws." Here, are we recollecting good or bad qualities? We are recollecting bad qualities. Fear arises because of this. This happens based on unwise consideration.

The person who clings to inferior things does not tend to recollect the good qualities of others. Instead, he starts having fears. It is just like when a child secretly goes to get some sugar from the sugar canister. When he sees his mother, he suddenly gets scared. Why is that? It is because a mother's goal is not to feed her child sugar. She has much higher goals for him. Since the mother's wish and the son's wish are contradictory, the son who knows this well gets scared upon seeing his mother.

In the same way, if you feel nervous upon seeing Lokuswaminwahanse or a kalyāṇamitta, it is because your goals are not in sync with the goals of Lokuswaminwahanse or your kalyāṇamittas. The kalyāṇamitta does not want to see you in an inferior state. That is why the person who has inferior goals and intentions feels nervous and scared upon seeing Lokuswaminwahanse or a kalyāṇamitta.

So what is the secret behind having those unnecessary fears? The reason is having inferior goals and intentions. We must never become empty individuals. You must strive to be **“people of Mahamevnāwa”** And if you want to become “people of Mahamevnāwa” you must start to recollect the good qualities of Lokuswaminwahanse and get rid of inferior goals and intentions.

Another reason we fall into trouble is because of the “association” with inferior people. So never associate with those who constantly speak ill of kalyāṇamittas. Such associations only give rise to fear.

There is a common saying that a piece of heated iron will never attach to an unheated piece of iron. A heated piece of iron will only attach to another piece of heated iron. In the same manner, individuals with inferior expectations will never associate with people who have noble aspirations. Individuals with noble aspirations will only associate with those with similar aspirations. In the same way, those with inferior aspirations will gather around those with similar aspirations. It is just like a vine of bitter melon wrapping around a Margosa tree. They complement one another.

So will it be possible to hold an individual who has inferior aspirations inside of Mahamevnāwa? It will be impossible, won’t it? Here in Mahamevnāwa except for the time we are in deep sleep, we have the opportunity to devote every moment of our lives to collecting merit. And those merits result in happiness. So if we spend our time, stressed, worried and concerned it is because we are not aware of the way to collect merits, isn’t it?

Consider this simile. Some people go in search of the royal palace and when they find the king, they live happily in the company of the king while enjoying royal luxuries. But some, who come in search of the king, find the toilet in the corner of the palace, dig it up with difficulty and get smeared in feces and live unhappily. In the same way, the person with inferior aspirations gathers a crowd around him and tries to be happy with gain, honor, fame and praise that he gets from the crowd.

Some people find the kitchen of the palace and stay on top of the charcoal of the fireplace, only to be burnt by the heat. In the same way, the people who have inferior thoughts and speak inferior words are burnt by the fire. He doesn’t even get the chance to meet the king.

You have now come to the royal palace, The Supreme Buddha’s dispensation. So you must try to associate with the king, the Supreme Buddha. In order to do that, you must know the goals of the king, The Supreme Buddha’s expectations for you. And try to be free from immoral and inferior qualities.

Take a look. Doesn’t practicing virtue result in happiness? Some of those results can even be experienced in this very life. So isn’t that enough for us to lead a happy life? Isn’t the

life of a monk truly meritorious? Just the fact that we renounced the household life and came to Mahamevnāwa to be ordained is truly meritorious.

So we must learn the right way to collect merit. But we can only learn this through Dhamma sermons. Do it this way. Read **Vimāna Vattu**. Then, make notes like this: **What is the merit he or she did, what were the results and what did I learn from it?**

Some individuals only offered a glass of water. But that merit was powerful enough to direct them to heaven. How did that happen? It happened because that person offered it with a pleasant mind. This is the way to collect merit! In this way, we must learn the methods of collecting merit and always try to collect merit. Then, those unnecessary fears don't arise within us. We become very friendly with others. That does not mean being overly friendly. It means that a person has respect for others. The person who truly honors others does not behave in a way that disrespects others, whether he is near or faraway from those people.

**A few more interesting points.**

Here are the consequences of an untrained, novice person staying in a kuti on his own. Without his own awareness, his mind becomes filled with passion. Unknowingly, his mind draws towards desires. Unknowingly, his mind fills with skeptical doubt. His mind slowly feels discontented. This is very dangerous. His mind becomes shallow, unenergetic, and lazy. He starts to avoid associating with others and wishes to be in seclusion.

Why does this happen? It is because this mind belongs to Māra. One way or another, Māra tries to mislead this mind. So when a person associates with a group of kalyāṇamittas, the Māra tries to pull that person away from that association.

So you must have the goal, "I want to realize the Four Noble Truths," within you and try to collect merit as much as possible. Read Puññābhisandha Sutta (**AN 5.45**). If we read and form a pleasant mind about these beautiful suttas then we become very happy. Why then do we live unhappily? It is because we haven't developed a strong confidence in these suttas.

If a person forms a pleasant mind about these suttas, then he develops confidence in the Noble Triple Gem. With that, he develops shame and fear of doing evil deeds. As a result, he makes an effort to eradicate unwholesome things and cultivates wholesome things. But a person can only practice things in this way if he frequently thinks, "I have been blessed with a real gain"

Imagine that a person forms a pleasant mind where he should actually form an unpleasant mind. And he forms an unpleasant mind where he should form a pleasant mind. In the same way, he praises the person who should be criticized and criticizes the person who should actually be praised. Are these things wholesome or unwholesome? Things that are

unwholesome gives rise to suffering and unhappiness. So without knowing this we say we are stressed and concerned.

Remember the story of Rajjumāla (**Vv.iv.12**). At first, she lived a very unhappy life. But at the end she was able to form an unpleasant mind where she should form an unpleasant mind and formed a pleasant mind where she should form a pleasant mind about the Supreme Buddha. As a result, she was able to live happily. So you too must form a pleasant mind where one should form a pleasant mind and praise the person who deserves praise because it will give rise to happy results. You must also form a pleasant mind about Mahamevnāwa because then you will be able to lead a joyful life.

All of us should attempt to achieve the main objective of Mahamevnāwa. Then we won't need to depend on external people. If we try to make connections with external people, then we will end up giving rise to dangerous cults and groups. Such groups only have immoral and inferior objectives. At the first glance, it may look as if they too have a valuable goal. But you will only be deceived. The only objective we must have is the objective for which Mahamevnāwa was established. And that goal is to continue the existence of Gautama Supreme Buddha's dispensation for a long time.

We must embrace that objective. The quality that can be seen in a person who embraces this objective is that he does not want to see Mahamevnāwa shatter into pieces. He does not want to see the monks separated and in disharmony. He does not clash with Lokuswaminwahanse's ideas. He does not emphasize and openly tell others the shortcomings of Mahamevnāwa. He strives to protect Mahamevnāwa while living in harmony.

But this can only be done if we let go of that unnecessary fear and cultivate the necessary fear. Only then will we become well controlled and become people who can never be pushed away from our main objective.





### **The real independence**

When someone thinks, “I don’t need anyone’s help. I can manage everything on my own,” it is not real independence. That’s simply obeying the thoughts and feelings that arise in your mind. In fact, that is dependence. That’s what you call surrendering to your mind.

Real independence means being able to live without getting caught by Māra. The person who is truly independent is free from the bonds of Māra. But in order to achieve that, one must first follow advice given. This will only happen if one cultivates the association with kalyānamittas.

Advice refers to the directions one gets asking one to: “Do this. Do not do that.” Accepting that advice and acting accordingly is something you need to do yourself. No one else can do that for you. Therefore, if you would like to become truly independent, you must become a person who follows advice.





### **Learn about Punishment**

When we make a mistake, learning and correcting that mistake leads to self progress. Punishment helps or reinforces to learn from one's mistakes and correct those mistakes.

Punishment exists in the ordinary society as well as in the ordained community. But punishment in the ordained community is entirely different from that in the ordinary society. In the ordinary society, punishment refers to retaliation. It gives rise to hatred between the person who inflicts the punishment and the person who is subjected to punishment.

But it is quite different in the Supreme Buddha's dispensation. Here, punishment helps an individual to reform himself. But this is not seen in the ordinary society. In the ordinary society, people attempt to prevent people's wrong doings by scaring and torturing that person.

So if you happened to be punished in the Supreme Buddha's dispensation, you must mindfully think, "This is for my own benefit." You must also ask yourself, "Why was I punished?" and realize, "I was punished because I did something wrong." Then, you must determine to never make that mistake again. If we contemplate in this way, would we ever develop a mind of hatred towards the person who punished us? We would not because we do not feel angry while we are being punished.

If someone behaves accordingly after wisely considering everything, then he becomes very happy at the end. He undergoes the punishment with pleasure. Why is that? Because he knows that he is repaying for his mistake.

For some punishments, a Vinaya Kamma (punishment according to the monastic code) stated by the Supreme Buddha has to be carried out. Without following that procedure, one is not able to correct one's mistake. So is it a gain or a loss to have to face punishments in this way? It's a gain because it helps us correct and rise above from our mistakes.

Therefore, remember that whatever punishment you get is for your own good. Such a person develops and advances within this dispensation. He corrects his mistakes. Keep in mind that the person who imposes the punishment does not do so with a mind of hatred. He does so compassionately with his mind established in a wholesome state. So always remember this and practice it in your lives.

You may recall the Theragāthā of Arahant Aṅgulimala (**Thag 16.8**).

**“A person may do wrongful actions at first. But later he stops all those wrongful actions. He is just like the full moon that has come out of the clouds.”**

The moon does not shine when it is covered by clouds. But when it comes out of the clouds it shines beautifully. It illuminates the entire world benefitting everyone. Therefore, you must wish, “May I be blessed with advice everyday.”





### **Avoid being rebellious**

Everyday, we are trying to browse through channels to tune you to a good one. That is, everyday we are trying to create a good background that will allow us to teach and emphasize an interesting Dhamma point to you.

But while I am trying to tune you to a good channel, most people's fuse goes out. So they do not end up finding the right channel. This is what happens. In the process of my attempt to create a good background for you, your mind clashes and entangles in something I say. As a result you think, "Oh that was a hint for me." That's the same as the blowing of a fuse. From that moment onwards, you are not able to find the right channel. Your mind does not focus on the Dhamma that is being taught. When you have thoughts such as, "He's hinting to me. That was a big knocking on my head," a mind is not able to connect with another mind. The Dhamma is properly transmitted only if the minds connect.

However, if a person realizes, "This person teaches this out of compassion. It is for our own good," it is just like a vine twinning around a tree. The vine only wishes to wrap around that tree. It does not cause any harm to the tree. And after some time, it wraps around the whole tree and flowers bloom from the vine giving rise to a beautiful sight.

In the same manner, if one listens to the Dhamma with a delighted mind then the Dhamma penetrates his mind. He progresses within the Dhamma. Then, flowers bloom in his mind.

When Lokuswaminwahanse gave advice, some people said things like, "Oh no, I wonder what he will say again today. We'll get an earful today too." Such people are like weak vines that grow at the root of the tree and spread on the ground. They are useless. In the end, they are only consumed by animals. Don't associate with people like these weak vines. Weak vines that spread on the ground never climb up on to large trees. If by chance it does grow onto a plant, it only grows on small plants which it eventually kills.

Just like a great ocean, you get a lot of advice from Mahamevnāwa. Consider this simile. In the past, clever people created lakes by building embankment on the ground to collect rain water. Using that rain water, they developed their agriculture.



But small creatures start to create small holes to come out of the lake. Because of those holes, water gradually starts to leak. As a result, the surrounding soil starts to erode. And with time, the whole embankment breaks down and the water flows out resulting in a disaster.

Similarly, now you get advice for your life. If you are clever then you can collect and save that advice. But this advice can only be collected if it is bound by the embankment of obedience (the tendency to accept advice). This embankment starts to erode because of rebelliousness. Rebelliousness is the tendency to obey your own thoughts instead of advice.

Such a person first creates the embankment of the lake. That is, he behaves as if he is obedient. Since the embankments are there water starts to accumulate. That is, he collects and stores advice. But erosion (rebelliousness) starts to occur. This happens when one thinks, “Oh, now I understand everything. I don’t need to ask anything from others.”

He now does whatever comes to his mind. He does not obey others. Because of that, he does not get any further advice. As a result, he steers in the wrong direction. A person does whatever comes to his mind because he continues to have thoughts such as: “I am capable. I know everything. I have been here for a long time. Why should I ask someone else?” Why are we easily defeated by these thoughts? It is because these thoughts belong to Māra. That’s why we easily get trapped by them.

At first, he may refuse to accept very minor advice and do whatever comes to his mind. But that gives enough room for rebelliousness to arise. He loses the tendency to obey others. The small leak starts. He refuses to do what others ask of him. He only acts according to his own thoughts. When that happens, the embankment of obedience breaks down.

Rebelliousness may start from something very minor. But as it grows, it becomes stronger and stronger and it ends up destroying the embankments of the lake called obedience. Once the embankments are destroyed, water does not accumulate regardless of how much it rains. In the same way, despite how much we advise, that advice does not penetrate into such a person’s mind.

### **How can the embankment be protected?**

We become compliant by becoming obedient. We become obedient by listening to others. We listen to others only if we are not rebellious. Now imagine that such a person who possesses the qualities of obedience wishes to do something. Even if it is a minor thing, he always asks others, “I feel like doing this. Do you think I should do it?” When the tendency to disobey others rebelliousness disappears, he tends to accept advice from others. Then, when others direct him to do something in a specific way, he tends to follow that advice. He obeys that advice. The tendency to disobey gradually disappears and as a result, others advise him happily. This is a real gain for him. He gets more and more advice.

In the same way, if you too can get rid of your tendency to be rebellious then you can make your land fertile. But in order to do this, we must first get rid of our stubbornness and start to obey advice.

So even if it's a trivial matter, you must get in the practice of asking the senior monks at the place you stay before you do something. This is an absolutely essential quality for our lives. This makes the lives of all of us truly wonderful. If we cultivate this quality then mutual respect, loyalty, affection emerge as a result. Therefore, you must try to get rid of erosion (rebelliousness), disobedience and ego that is present in your life.





**Let us develop humility in this manner**

If we get a disease like filariasis, we will not be able to live with the family. That's how isolated we get. Stubbornness to the mind is like filariasis to the leg. The moment the filariasis known as stubbornness enters the mind, he cultivates unwholesome things.

When a person suffers from a regular illness, the family gathers around him and shows him love and affection and tries to help him recover. Similarly, when an obedient person a person who is not rebellious falls into a difficult situation, the community of monks helps him. They help him overcome things such as disciplinary offenses.

So you must become individuals of supreme quality. In order to achieve that, you must try not to be rebellious. You must learn to listen to others. You must ask for advice from elders. The person who isn't rebellious easily gets rid of qualities such as pride, retaliation and hatred. Such a person becomes appreciated by the community of monks. As a result, he receives advice that he hasn't gotten before.

**Sannivāsa Sutta (AN 2. 62)**

**Oh, meritorious monks! Let me tell you about living together with undisciplined persons and living together with disciplined persons. How does one live in the company of undisciplined persons? How do undisciplined individuals live in the company of other groups?**

**Oh meritorious monks, a senior monk feels thus, "Let not a senior monk advise me! Let not a middle order monk advise me! Let not even a novice advise me! I too shall not advise a senior monk, a middle order monk or a novice."**

**"If a senior monk advises me he does so without any compassion. Not with compassion. I will tell him that his advice is not necessary. I will exhaust him. Even if I see that I have committed disciplinary offenses I will not take action to rectify them. If a middle order monk advises me... If a novice advises me..."**

**A middle order monk feels... A novice monk feels...**

**Oh meritorious monks! How does living with disciplined individuals take place? Similarly, how do disciplined individuals live with others?**

**A senior monk feels thus, "May a senior monk advise me! May a middle order monk advise me! May a novice monk also advise me! Let me also advise senior monk. Let me also advise middle order monks. Let me also advise novice monks!"**

**Senior, middle or novice monks only advise me with love and compassion. Not devoid of love and compassion. I will tell him that he's doing a great thing. I will not tire him. Whenever I realize that I have committed religious offenses I will rectify them."**

**A middle monk feels.... A novice monk feels.....**

See how much can be learned from these suttas. If a person forms a pleasant mind about these suttas then they feel as if these suttas were taught just for them. That's a characteristic that can be seen within a person who forms a pleasant mind. Therefore, we must be modest. In order to practice these suttas, we must first develop confidence in them. A person who has confidence {in the Noble Triple Gem} develops fear and shame {to do unwholesome things}.

As a result, he becomes obedient. He becomes mindful as to what should be done and what shouldn't be done. He starts to welcome advice. He does not do whatever comes to his mind.

The idea, "If someone advises me then I will try to exhaust him," can be seen in this sutta. This is a very rough attitude. Would a person with such a rough attitude consult the Sanghoupstayaka Bhante or other senior monks before doing something?

Furthermore, why does that person feel, "Let me not advice others"? That is because if one gives advice then he has to accept advice from others also. That is why he does not give advice. This is the reason why I said from the beginning that you should think of advice as **something pleasant**.

The person who dislikes advice ends up rejecting the teaching of the Supreme Buddha. Why is that? It is because in the discourses you find "Oh meritorious monks, you must do this." The Supreme Buddha's discourses are full of advice. Unfortunately, when people reject them, they do not "just" reject them either. They insult them first and then reject them.

Recall how the Supreme Buddha tried to settle a crisis one day. The monks who were there said, "Venerable Sir, you can rest. We ourselves will solve our problems."

We teach you what is found in these suttas as well. So when we give advice, you must adapt your mind to accept that advice thinking, **"This advice is given out of love and compassion. Not devoid of love and compassion. This is a real gain for me."**

If you feel this way, then you are able to live peacefully. When a person accepts advice his mind calms down. Can you now see how harsh this mind can be to want to exhaust a person who gives advice? Can a person understand the Dhamma with such a harsh and cruel mind?

We must accept the Supreme Buddha's advice with great respect. That advice must always be in our hearts. Then, when something arises that is in contradictory to the teaching, we can easily recollect what we practice regularly and suppress that unwholesome state.

The person who has confidence in the Noble Triple Gem puts this advice into practice. As a result, he develops shame and fear for unwholesome things. He makes an effort to eradicate unwholesome things. Because of that effort he will eventually eradicate unwholesome things. Such a person is well aware of the difference between wholesome and unwholesome actions.

In order to develop these qualities, try to come over to this calm state. The Supreme Buddha has explained everything to us. There is nothing missing. Doesn't this show that the Supreme Buddha knows everything there is to know? Hasn't the Supreme Buddha well proclaimed this Noble Dhamma? There is no such thing as an "unwholesome state" that is impossible to be eradicated.

So you too must strive to live in this calm state. Always try to train your mind in this way. Would such a person ever become rebellious? Of course not! One must have a soft and tender mind in order for him to realize the Noble Dhamma. One cannot accomplish this task with a rough mind. How can a person who doesn't tolerate advice attain fruits and paths of this dispensation?

Some may say, "You can simply follow the book and do things on your own. There is nothing to ask." But do not believe such things. Read the Therīgāthā of Arahant Bhikkhuni Subhā. (Thig 10)

**"It has been eight days since I received ordination. It was beautiful Arahant Bhikkhuni Uppalavannā who disciplined and guided me. I too became free from Māra and attained the Triple Knowledge."**

Now you can see that even arahants have not said things like, "There is no need to ask others for help." So isn't it wrong if we get advice that goes against the behavior of Arahants? Here, discipline and guidance does not mean that he does everything for him. It simply refers to directing another person in what should be done and what should not be done.

But in order to get that guidance, we must first ask. Even if Sakka, the king of devas comes and tells you, "Come with me to that cave. I will provide you with the four requisites. I will look after your well being," you must reply, "Oh Sakka, many merits to you for the offer. But I would rather clean the washrooms with my own hands and stay here in Mahamevnāwa because that is a real gain for me."

We tell you things like this to show you how rare the occurrence of a Sambuddhasāsa is. So you must embody the spirit of Mahamevnāwa. That means you become happy because of the precepts you protect. You feel happy because of the Noble Dhamma and by doing the required work to support the community of monks. You feel happy because of the people you associate with. You feel happy because of your teacher. You rejoice in letting go. You rejoice in

your physical, verbal and mental actions. You have the goal of realizing the Noble Dhamma. Such a person does not become happy by things like gain, honour or fame.

We too are capable of achieving this. So let us strive to achieve these goals and embody the spirit of Mahamevnāwa!





**Do we really need kalyāṇamittas?**

You must start to become disciplined right away. You must develop a disciplined life. Why should you do so? Because this brahmacariya (pure life) we lead is for the purpose of disciplining ourselves. Its purpose is to achieve dispassion and cessation.

Dispassion, cessation, and eradication are dependent on self discipline. But this is not something that must be maintained only in the alms hall. You must practice it here in the residence as well. We believe that our eyes become unrestrained only if we see women. But it can happen in respect to men too. So you must realize this danger and always strive to restraint your sense faculties. Here, we are not asking you to simply close your eyes and refrain from speaking with others.

If when you go to the alms hall, your mind is in an unwholesome state then you will feel very uncomfortable (unwholesome things are like a sharp wedge). But if your mind is established in a wholesome state then you feel exquisite. Most of the time when you go to the alms hall:

- Your eyes are drawn towards the crowd.
- Your ears are drawn towards sounds.
- You feel like seeing who is present.

Therefore you must:

- Think that the Supreme Buddha has advised us to be disciplined.
- Think of how much trouble these people have to go through to give us alms and how they do it with a pleasant mind. Think about their confidence in the Noble Triple Gem.
- Wish them blessing such as, “May everyone here be well and happy.”

The people who come here form a pleasant mind upon seeing disciplined conduct. So we should never be unrestrained. People form a pleasant mind about this pure life. So we must cultivate that life.

Think in this way as well:

- ☆ I must develop my confidence in the Noble Triple Gem.
- ☆ I must develop my virtuous conduct.
- ☆ I must develop my effort.
- ☆ I must become more and more disciplined.

We are learning these suttas in order to purify the path to Nibbāna. Therefore:

- ✱ Learn the Dhamma that you have not learned yet. Listen to the Dhamma and read Dhamma books.
- ✱ Clarify the knowledge you already have. Engage in Dhamma discussions.

Learn these teachings and remember them for as long as you live. Make use of them and teach them to others.

#### **From the Phala Sutta – (SN 55.55)**

If you form a pleasant mind about these suttas then no one will be able to bend you to the opposite side.

**“Oh Monks! If these four factors are practiced and they are practiced intensely, they will aid in attaining the fruit of Sotāpanna (Stream Entry). Which four factors? The association with kalyāṇamittas, listening to the Dhamma, wise consideration, following the Noble Eightfold path. ”**

If this sutta penetrates in to your mind properly then you’ll become a wonderful person. Your conduct will become serene and you will become a very powerful person. No one will be able to turn you to a different direction.

It’s just like this. Aluminum is very light. It can be bent even with two fingers. But if you mix it with titanium it cannot be pierced even with a drill, let alone bend it. Similarly, if you develop true confidence in the Noble Triple Gem then you become a powerful person.

Some people live feeling uneasy and stressed as if they have swallowed a lump of steel. It does not digest. It does not come out through vomit. It does not pass out as stool. This happens because he lacks the happiness one gets because of having confidence in the Noble Dhamma.

Therefore, you must at least trust and have faith in this Noble Dhamma. That Dhamma will make you a fearless person and you will feel light hearted. Then you will be able to live a cheerful and happy life.

While doing this, make sure that you regularly use books such as the Theragāthā, Therīgāthā and the Dhammapada. When you read Theragāthā, you must realize the beautiful



nature that exists in the hearts of invincible sages who are free from defilements. The person who tries to understand the beauty of such minds tries to make one's own mind the same.

Consider this simile. There is no taste in vegetables that have just been boiled. It becomes delicious only when we cook it with spices. In the same way, we must get in the practice of using books such as Thera Theri Gatha and Dhammapda because it makes this path even more exquisite.

Until we reach arahantship, there's always room to procrastinate. The danger of procrastination and going off guard always exist. The four factors (The association with kalyāṇamittas, listening to the Dhamma, wise consideration and following the Noble Eightfold path) completes only when we reach arahantship.

The Supreme Buddha taught us that it is impossible to repay the debt we owe the person who helps us take refuge in the Noble Triple Gem. Believe this without a doubt. If you believe this fact, then your mind will be just like that piece of aluminum that was mixed with a valuable metal. Someone else's words cannot misguide that person. He lives happily.

It is like a beggar winning a big lottery. Winning the lottery is not enough. He must go and get the money also. But some people lose their lottery ticket before going to get the money. So, you must try not to lose that winning ticket.

Suppose we become Sotāpanna. But until we reach arahantship we have to seek the help of kalyāṇamittas. Practicing the path means practicing those four factors. If someone practices these factors then he is travelling in the path.

So if we carry the Tripitaka book and go into the forest {hoping to achieve Nibbāna} will it work? If that happens then we are just like a beautifully painted vehicle with its wheels removed. Despite how much you turn the steering wheel, the vehicle does not move. It only tires you out.

Therefore, you must accept these suttas with utmost respect. Then, it will become easy for you to follow the Noble Eightfold path. The Noble Eightfold path refers to the restraining of one's life, achieving dispassion and complete cessation.

May you too develop a mind that will never let go of the association with kalyāṇamittas!





### **Who is this doctrine for?**

If we panic today then we can lose what we have gained. And it is impossible to know when we will come across this Noble Dhamma again. Therefore, we must practice this Dhamma with patience.

#### **Kalyāṇamitta Sutta – (SN-3.18)**

One day King Kosala says to the Supreme Buddha:

**“Venerable Sir, while I was thinking in seclusion this thought occurred to me. The Blessed One’s teaching is well proclaimed. Only those who have kalyāṇamittas are able to be heirs to that Dhamma. Only those with noble companions benefit from this Dhamma.”**

Then the Supreme Buddha replies and confirms:

**“Yes, meritorious King, That is just so.”**

The only refuge we all have is the Noble Dhamma. So this sutta explains what types of people are able to benefit from this Dhamma.

Suppose we have many Dhamma books and we regularly read them. But just because we read the Dhamma, is it correct to think that we have gained true refuge from the Dhamma? If we lose the association with kalyāṇamittas then we instantly lose the Dhamma. That is why we must cultivate that association until we reach the very end of our journey.

#### **Recollect the Phala Sutta (SN. 55. 55)**

Would a person be able to take refuge in the Dhamma without the association of kalyāṇamittas? Without that association would they be able to truly practice the Dhamma? It would be impossible. They might be able to memorize and recite the Dhamma. But they will never be able to take advantage of this Dhamma and create their own refuge.

Therefore, memorizing is not essential. Suppose a person memorizes the Dhamma and thinks, “I have now memorized everything. I don’t need anyone now.” Similarly, the person who is unable to memorize thinks, “I cannot memorize the Dhamma,” and he suffers. Both of these people are falling into a great danger. However this does not imply that one should not memorize the Dhamma.

Therefore, the Supreme Buddha taught us to discipline ourselves in the following manner:

**“Therefore, Great King, this is the way you must train yourself. I will become a person who has kalyāṇamittas. I will be someone who has noble companions. I will be someone who seeks the company of kalyāṇamittas.’ Training in this way, you must practice this one thing with the help of that association also. That is, being diligent in cultivating wholesome actions.”**

So, how does this diligence arise? It arises due to the association of kalyāṇamittas. (The person who does not have that company procrastinates). But the person who has kalyāṇamittas becomes a wise person.

Suppose we get to read the complete Tripitaka and we have access to all suttas. But if we distance ourselves from the association of kalyāṇamittas then we will lose this important opportunity we have gained.

If a person is to remain in the association of kalyāṇamittas, then that person must develop faith and trust in these suttas. If they develop that trust then they will not want to lose this association. Such a person gains the real refuge of the Dhamma. He gains the opportunity to understand the Dhamma.

Therefore, do not distance yourself from the association with kalyāṇamittas for as long as you live. There is nothing more unbeneficial, unfortunate and saddening than losing the association with kalyāṇamittas!





### **Here's where you go wrong**

One place where many of us go wrong is when we clash with advice given to us. Not realizing that **advice is given for our benefit** is another place where we go wrong. The person who feels this way stops associating with the person who gives advice.

Therefore, train your mind in this way: **"Advice is something wonderful. I will accept advice with a pleasant mind."**

Consider this simile. In the ordinary world, when a person sees a healthy and valuable plant, they water that plant thinking it will grow into a healthy tree. They put fertilizer and wait to see whether the plant gives rise to new buds. They check whether the stem of the tree looks healthy. If they see signs of growth they weed around the plant and add more fertilizer.

In the same way, Lokuswaminwahanse did something truly wonderful. When he saw healthy plants, he watered them. But some plants naturally wilt, buds dry out, and leaves start to fall off. If a person continues to water a plant like that, people who are watching him will laugh at him because he's just exhausting himself. In the end, he'll abandon his effort.

☆ Until when should you think, "I do not know anything. It is the Blessed One who knows everything"? You must think in this way until the day you reach Parinibbāna. Recall how the Supreme Buddha asked questions from monks. The monks replied, **"Venerable Sir, this Dhamma exists with you as the origin. With you as the leader. With you as the refuge. Venerable Sir, it will be great if you yourself provide us with the answer. The monks will remember as taught by the Blessed one."** The monks didn't try to be too clever.

Therefore, think day and night everyday, **"The Supreme Buddha knows everything. I do not know anything."** You must also think, **"If the Supreme Buddha taught something, I will adapt my life accordingly."**

☆ This journey begins and ends with the association of kalyāṇamittas. This journey ends with the eradication of all defilements.

Something most people in this world do not like to hear is advice. But if someone willingly listens to advice then he will be able to be reborn in heaven and attain Nibbāna. Why so? Because the fertilizer that is needed to feed our mind is what is known as

advice. Advice is the medicine for the mind. If a person takes delight in being advised, then he does not pay attention to the nature of advice {harsh or gentle}.

When we want a healthy body, we seek advice about exercise. People instruct us to run, do weights, and drink milk. When they advise us in this way, we happily follow it. Why do we do that? Because we want to have a healthy body.

But we didn't come here looking to develop a healthy body. We came here to develop a healthy mind. And advice is the food needed to acquire a healthy mind. That advice might be harsh at times and gentle at other times.

Suppose someone advises you harshly at some point. But if you are a clever person you will think, **"He has so much trust in me. This is such a gain for me."** If a person thinks in this way then he's the person who travels farther in the path to Nibbāna.

**Here's another obstacle that will cause you to go off guard:**

That is thinking, "Now I understand everything." If a person thinks in this way, it will destroy him. He will never seek advice from anyone.

**You must realize that until the day you eradicate all taints, you are a person who is training in the path.** Don't try to evaluate whether you can or whether you cannot develop this path. Instead, strive to practice the path to Nibbāna according to the Noble Dhamma and the guidance of kalyāṇamittas!





### **Do not lose what you have gained**

What is the best thing in this world? The Noble Dhamma is the best thing in this world. What is the next best thing? The time that's available for practicing the Dhamma. What is the next best thing? Realizing that one has gained the time to practice the Dhamma. What is the next best thing? Being diligent in practicing the Dhamma.

All these are gained from the association with kalyāṇamittas. That's how one is able to hear the Dhamma. Such a person strives to be diligent. If a person does not have the company of kalyāṇamittas then it's just the same as sitting under a fruitless tree. There's no comfort in sitting there. That tree may not even have any leaves. It will feel as if he's sitting surrounded by thorn bushes.

Some trees are useless regardless of whether the tree contains leaves. This can be compared to the association with people who are not kalyāṇamittas. So don't even seek the shade of such trees. There are some trees where even standing under its shade can poison you. It causes a rash. Those trees may look beautiful and they might be covered with flowers. But just one touch is enough to poison you. Just the same is the association with bad people.

Therefore, don't associate with fruitless, worthless people who are fruitless {{(worthless)}}. Don't go and stand under poisonous trees. Only associate with kalyāṇamittas because kalyāṇamittas are truly rare. But in order to be in the company of kalyāṇamittas you must first start to associate with them.

How do we recognize a kalyāṇamitta? We can easily do this if we ourselves become a kalyāṇamitta. Such a person never goes to associate with pāpamittas (evil friends). You become a kalyāṇamitta only if you lead your life in accordance with the Supreme Buddha's teaching. That means you develop confidence in the Noble Triple Gem. Without confidence, you cannot go even a step further.

Suppose we are stuck in a mud hole with a few other people. As long as we are there, we have to associate with those who are stuck with us. We cannot associate with people who are not in the mud hole.

But the moment we come out of that mud hole, we are able to associate with people who are not stuck in mud. Similarly, if you are a true person then you have nothing to worry about. Only true people will come to associate with you. That's a natural phenomenon.

The person who comes out of the mud hole does not go back to associate with people who are still stuck in mud. So we must be very careful while we are stuck in mud because those who are stuck with us do not want to see us escape. But those who are above feel, “Oh how wonderful would it be if we could pull these people out.” Those who are still stuck in mud thinks, “I wonder if he’s going to leave us and get out of this hole. It looks like he is. We shouldn’t let him go.”

Now do you understand why we should only seek the company of true people? Then, we would never be in this danger. We seek the company of untrue people because of unmindfulness.

It is very difficult to recognize a kalyāṇamitta. People may say different things. But we must be skillful enough to be able to differentiate the kalyāṇamitta from the pāpamitta. In order to be skillful, you must listen carefully to what we teach you. Then you can contemplate and see for yourself whether we advise you out of compassion or not.

If the group gets divided because of advice and you end up leaving Mahamevnāwa then don’t consider such words to be proper advice. You must relate that advice to suttas that explain the path to Nibbāna. If they do not relate, then don’t clash with that advice. Simply let go of it.

Relate that advice to our original goal and see whether that advice takes you closer to reaching the objective that brought you to Mahamevnāwa or whether it takes you away from reaching that goal.

Suppose you are digging a well and as you dig down you find a water spring. Then, a person advises you to dig further down. If you listen to that person and starts to dig further that spring gradually gets covered. Does that serve your purpose?

In the same way, as you practice the Dhamma people will say, “That’s not the way. You must go into a forest. It is breathtaking there.” They’ll say, “The Dhamma books are your kalyāṇamitta. When you are in the forest, you’ll be able achieve concentration much more easily.”

Back to the simile of the well people will say, “There are many springs in the ground. Continue digging further.” But if we continue then the water spring that was already found will be lost. The wise person does not dig further once he finds a spring. Only the fool continues to dig down even after finding a good water spring. The fool loses the spring he has found but the wise man protects what he has found.

Therefore, when someone gives you advice, contemplate and see whether you are closing the spring you have found. Are you losing what you have gained? Find out:

**1. Whether the spring you have found is growing.**

**2. Whether it is being stabilized.**

**If it is {growing or is being stabilized} then follow that advice. Associate with the person who gave that advice. Associate with that person while commending his efforts. If there's someone who has not heard his advice then direct that person to him.**

Then, the well you have dug will fill with water to the very top. But if you decide to take the Dhamma books and go into the forest you will be the cause of your own destruction. Not only that, you will ruin others also. Everyone will be ruined. In the end, the well you dug will turn into a pit not good enough even for a frog to live in. Ultimately, innocent animals will fall into that hole and die, making it a dangerous pit.

So don't dig to find water springs that eventually gets closed. Dig for a spring that will fill the well with water. Then, it will turn into a beautiful lake overflowing with water. So only dig until you find a spring that has lots of water. Similarly, seek advice as much as possible. Despite what others may say, the best place that facilitates the development of virtue, concentration wisdom is here at Mahamevnāwa.

Don't ever try to become people who are blind or mentally and physically disabled. Become someone who is mindful, effortful, humble, obedient and studious. Then, one day you'll become a true person. There are plenty of opportunities for people to become great persons here in Mahamevnāwa. So stay right here and try to become a great person.

The advantage of coming to Mahamevnāwa is that the big problems someone had turn into small ones. Problems as big as the sky may become as small as a grain of sand. That is what one gains by coming to Mahamevnāwa. But the moment you leave Mahamevnāwa, those small problems turn into big ones. We hope you'll never be faced with that misfortune.

Another instance where we may fall into a danger is this: A senior monk comes to Mahamevnāwa wishing to get some advice from us. But, when we see him, we immediately go to him thinking, "Oh here's a great monk. We must go and get some advice from him," unaware that this monk himself has come here to get advice from Mahamevnāwa. In the end, that senior monk ends up not asking for advice and we too fall into a big danger.

So don't go asking for advice in this way. Don't fall into that danger. There is no need whatsoever to get advice from external sources. Even when we get advice from an internal source we must follow it according to the criterion outlined here. Why is that? It is because a person does not become a true person just because he comes to Mahamevnāwa.

You must be especially careful not to take advice from those who come from the outside because there's a great risk that you may fall into big trouble. Similarly, if you have not



been assigned the responsibility of giving advice, do not do it. You must get permission before you give advice, there is no harm in participating in Dhamma discussion.

**Become a powerful tree.**

We are still small seeds. How can a seed feed another individual? A seed can feed another individual only if it gets toasted and is made available to be eaten. But here in Mahamevnāwa we only plant seeds. With time, those seeds germinate and grow into large trees. Delicious fruits start growing in them. Those fruits can be eaten by anyone. In this way, Lokuswaminwahanse plants seeds. But people from the outside only want toast those seeds and eat them. So you too must strive to become a powerful tree!





### **Do you really have the association of kalyāṇamittas?**

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The association with kalyāṇamittas is what we must cultivate throughout our life. It is what takes us through this journey of Dhamma practice. One becomes a Sotāpanna disciple (stream entrant), Sakadāgāmi disciple (once returner), Anāgāmi disciple (never returner) and an Arahant only if one practices the four factors: association with kalyāṇamittas, listening to the Dhamma, engaging and wise consideration and following the Noble Eightfold path.

In order to attain this, these four factors must become a part of our life. Only through the company of kalyāṇamittas are we able to gain the other three factors. Therefore, the Supreme Buddha advised us to practice these four factors. The Blessed One advised us to practice them as much as possible.

**[Phala Sutta – SN 55.55]**

That is how we would be able to attain fruits and paths such as the fruit of Sotāpanna. For that, we must continuously maintain the association with kalyāṇamittas.

But how do we do that? If we lose this one factor, association with kalyāṇamittas, then we lose the rest. Everything else depends on this one factor. So the association with kalyāṇamittas is not something that should be considered unimportant. Our fortune depends solely on this factor. But unfortunately many consider this fortune to be something trivial.

In the ordinary world, when we find out that we have gotten admission into university we are overwhelmed with joy. But that joy is ordinary joy. The happiness we get from knowing that we have been able to understand the Dhamma is endless.

Unfortunately, only a very few people rejoice in realizing what they have gained. This gain becomes embedded into our lives only through the association with kalyāṇamittas. It is an invaluable gain.

So think carefully and strive to gain that invaluable association because then everything else will follow from that.

Most people feel that they have already gained the association with kalyāṇamittas. Although they believe this, they haven't actually gained it. If a person truly gains this association then he will never lose it.

It's like wearing an invisible dress. Even though you think you are wearing it, you really are not. So think carefully, contemplate and try to gain the true association with kalyāṇamittas. Otherwise you won't gain anything even if you stay in Mahamevnāwa for several years.

Another simile. There are some hens that never lay eggs. They just sit around. But those who see this hen think, "Oh, this hen is working so hard to hatch her eggs. I wonder if chicks will come out today." But chicks never appear. However, the person who sees the true situation gives that hen some eggs. But that foolish hen doesn't accept those eggs. In the same way, some people just say that they have gained the association with kalyāṇamittas. But they really have not.

The person who has truly gained the association of kalyāṇamittas is not like this. If the hen hatches her eggs, wouldn't chicks come out from those eggs? They would because that is the nature of things. In the same way, the person who maintains the association of kalyāṇamittas gets to learn the Dhamma. When he hears the Dhamma he engages in wise consideration. As a result, he becomes a wise person.

Look at the Therīgāthā of Arahant Bhikkhuni Kisagotami. **(Thig 10)**

**"The Supreme Buddha praised the association with kalyāṇamittas solely for the benefit of the world. Even a fool who associates with kalyāṇamittas becomes a wise man."**

Even a fool can become a wise man if he associates with kalyāṇamittas. And what happens to those who are wise? They reach Nibbāna.

The person who likes the association of kalyāṇamittas must also like practicing virtue. Can a person who is in the company of kalyāṇamittas engage in idle chatter or drink alcohol? No they cannot. They have to let go of those habits if they want to maintain the association with kalyāṇamittas.

He must start to like engaging in the ten wholesome topics of conversation and learn to exert oneself. If he is in the company of kalyāṇamittas would he be able to avoid going to Buddha Vandana? No, he wouldn't. He will have to make an effort to wake up in the morning to go for the morning puja.

Can he sleep during the day time? No, he will have to stay awake. Do you see how we are able to exert ourselves if we are in the company of kalyāṇamittas? We end up exerting ourselves even without realizing it.

Furthermore, one who is in the company of kalyāṇamittas must be willing to distinguish between wholesomeness and unwholesomeness. He must wish to develop wisdom.

Then, his mind gradually develops the factors required to attain Nibbāna. His mind matures and develops. This happens without a doubt. Read **Meghiya Sutta (Ud 4.1)**

So can this association with kalyāṇamittas be considered as something insignificant? No. This can only be found within the Supreme Buddha's dispensation. And you can optimally obtain it from Mahamevnāwa.

So how do we maintain this association without losing it? (If we gain this association and are able to maintain it then we will definitely attain Nibbāna.)

Recall how we can lose this association:

1. If we only think about what we haven't gained without thinking about what we have gained then we will not be able to truly associate with kalyāṇamittas.
2. The person who feels, "I am the one who knows everything. I understand everything," also loses it.
3. The person who has not realized the Dhamma but thinks he has also loses it.
4. The person who always expects praise and honor from others also loses this association.
5. The person who gives into things like gain and honor, fame and compliments and becomes disobedient also loses it.

#### **So how do we hold on to what we have gained?**

We do that by thinking, **"My kalyāṇamittas are compassionate towards me. They want to see me succeed."** If one learns to think in this way he becomes humble, obedient and follows advice given."

Consider this simile. When a child goes near a flaming lamp, the mother says, "Son, don't go there." If he does not obey her then she tells him a bit more harshly. Why does she do that? Is it because parents are children's enemies? No, they advise out of compassion.

In the same way, we get advice asking us not to use things like iPods and walkmans. But no one is there to check whether we follow that advice or not. Do we give such advice because we are angry with you or are jealous of you? No, we give this advice out of compassion. So if someone thinks, **"This advice is given to me out of compassion. They want to see me succeed,"** would they ever clash with advice? No, they wouldn't.

Suppose someone comes to associate with kalyāṇamittas (i.e. he comes to Mahamevnāwa) expecting to eat curd and honey (i.e. expecting to be spoken to with gentle words). He doesn't know that kalyāṇamittas are compassionate towards him and they only wish for his advancement. So when he gets the real curd and honey (i.e. advice) he throws it away and ends up just eating the plastic container.

He clashes with advice. He thinks, “This person scolded me.” Even if a kalyāṇamitta tries to speak to him, he thinks that they are trying to scold him. If someone advises through a letter, he simply throws it away. He does not tolerate advice. He clashes with them. Why does this happen? This happens because he doesn’t think in the right way as mentioned above. He comes expecting to be treated with curd and honey.

What is this curd and honey that he expects? He hopes to be praised and be given positions and posts. He expects inferior things like that.

But the real curd and honey are not those. The real curd and honey is “advice.” So, he throws away the real honey and curd and wishes to take the plastic (unworthy things). He starts thinking, “They are strict with me. They always scold me. They are jealous of me.” He maybe living together with kalyāṇamittas but has he truly gained their company? No, he hasn’t.

Then how do we gain this association with kalyāṇamittas? First, one must want to understand the Dhamma. That is, one must feel the need to gain the association of kalyāṇamittas. This is the person who will think, “My kalyāṇamittas are compassionate towards me.”

The Supreme Buddha has taught, **“Of all things one can externally gain for the purpose of realizing the Dhamma, I do not see anything greater than the association with kalyāṇamittas through my supremely enlightened wisdom.” (AN 1.71)**

But the individual who goes in search of inferior and immoral things does not wish to understand the Dhamma. His only wish is to gain those inferior things. But the person who wishes to understand this Dhamma realizes that kalyāṇamittas have compassion for him and that they only want to see him succeed. Therefore, he thinks about kalyāṇamittas both day and night and he never feels that they are against him.

The Supreme Buddha teaches to think like this: **“My kalyāṇamittas have compassion towards me. They wish to see me succeed. They are the ones who guide and advise me. It is a blessing to have such noble friends around me. It is an excellent gain.”**

**(Nandiya Sutta – AN 11.13)**

An excellent gain means it’s a complete gain. There’s nothing missing there. The person who frequently thinks in this way is able to constantly associate with kalyāṇamittas. Such a person feels happy upon seeing, hearing or recollecting about kalyāṇamittas. And how does he maintain this friendship? He cultivates it while helping, respecting and attending to the needs of kalyāṇamittas. This relationship is just like a bark is to the tree, it is always maintained.

So now:

☆ **He has the company of kalyāṇamittas.**

- ☆ **He praises the benefits one gains from the association with kalyāṇamittas.**
- ☆ **If someone lacks the association of kalyāṇamittas, he helps them gain it.**
- ☆ **At the appropriate time, he speaks well of those who have gained the company of kalyāṇamittas.**

**(Devata Sutta – AN 6.69)**

These are the characteristics of an individual who associates with kalyāṇamittas while attending to their needs. What benefits does he gain through this?

The greatest benefit is that he is now travelling on the path to Nibbāna and he will never stray from this path. He leads a joyful life. He doesn't feel discontented. Even if he feels it, he is quickly able to get rid of it. He doesn't feel stressed. He doesn't have a problem with staying together as a group. He doesn't clash when others try to help him. In fact, he always works to help others. He doesn't think of taking the time to help others as a loss to him. He knows that it benefits him. That is a natural phenomenon.

Why does it happen that way? It happens that way because he has completely gotten rid of selfishness. Instead, he makes altruism a part of his life. He doesn't rejoice in doing immoral things. Why is that? Because the person who is in the company of kalyāṇamittas gets rid of immoral wishes completely. He does not engage in the thirty-two-kinds of useless speech. He doesn't tease people. He doesn't avoid helping others. But if you don't have these good qualities then realize that you still haven't truly gained the association of kalyāṇamittas. You must infer that on your own. If a person frequently associates with kalyāṇamittas wouldn't he be able to attain fruits such as the fruit of Sotāpanna? Would a person who is on the path to Nibbāna do things such as hint, insult and embarrass others? No, because they are not part of the ten wholesome topics of conversation.

So if you still have these inferior qualities within you, realize that you have not truly gained the association with kalyāṇamittas. So continue to wish for it and try your best to acquire it.

If we think in the way that was mentioned above (i.e. my kalyāṇamittas have compassion towards me....) we all end up becoming kalyāṇamittas. Then, we strive to help each other. So try to gain this company because if this association is lost then the Supreme Buddha's dispensation will break down.

In a time like this, it was Lokuswaminwahanse who purely revitalized the Sambuddhasāsana. There's no debating that. So what will happen if we become the cause of hurting the feelings of the person who gave us this invaluable gain? If that happens, then this invaluable gain will be lost to the future generation.

If that were to happen, then it would be like a dark cloud covering the sun. In the past, there used to be gigantic animals called dinosaurs. At that time, a piece of asteroid hit the earth and created a big cloud of dust that fully covered the sun (the sun's rays were not able to reach the earth). As a result, dinosaurs became extinct from this world (it's an ordinary story).

In the same way, if this Sambuddhasāsana continues to be alive in the future, it will give birth to powerful people who achieve higher levels of concentration and become Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi and Arahants. But if that sun is covered, these powerful people will not come into being. So don't ever become the cloud of dust that covers the Sun (i.e. meritorious Lokuswaminwahanse). Always recollect the qualities of kalyāṇamittas.





### **Let us be independent while being in the company of Kalyāṇamittas**

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We must try to be in the company of kalyāṇamittas. At the same time, we must do what needs to be done independently. Both of these factors are found in the Dhamma.

If we think of these factors to the extreme, then we go wrong. What if we get rid of both these factors? Would that work? No, it wouldn't. We need both of these factors in our lives and both of these factors depend on the association with kalyāṇamittas. Without it, they would not exist. The person who is not skillful in making this differentiation cannot enter the path to Nibbāna.

If someone thinks that the company of just one person is enough because he can get that person to do everything, then he is steering in the wrong direction. Such a person does not have the real company of noble friends. A kalyāṇamitta does not do things for you. He only teaches you how to do it. "Do it this way. Don't do it that way." You are the one who has to do it.

It is in order to find out how things have to be done that we cultivate the association of kalyāṇamittas. Once we learn how things should be done, we will have to do it on our own. No one else can do it for us. In order to do this, we must develop listening skills, patience, obedience, humility and determination. The person who believes that he can do everything on his own is not able to do so in reality. Since he thinks that the association of kalyāṇamittas is not necessary he is unable to:

- Listen to what he has not heard before.
- Improve what he already knows. This can only be done in the company of kalyāṇamittas.

If someone thinks that he can get this done through somebody else, then he will never be able to relate what he learns to his own life. Why is that? Because he doesn't have the idea, "I must do this on my own" within him. Because of this, mindfulness, wisdom and determination do not develop within him. That is why he is unable to relate the Dhamma to his own life.



This is why we must develop both qualities that were mentioned earlier. Then, we tend to work independently. We must properly learn the distinction between doing things independently and cultivating the association with kalyāṇamittas.

We need the company of kalyāṇamittas in order to learn the path to Nibbāna and find answers to our problems. It is wrong to think that you will be able to find solutions on your own. We need that association in order to hear and discuss the Dhamma. But Samatha (calm-abiding meditation) and Vipassanā (insight meditation) must be developed on your own.

Getting rid of unwholesome thoughts, developing wholesome thoughts and differentiating between wholesome and unwholesome things must be done on your own. The kalyāṇamitta can only help us with these things. For example, he can direct us to suttas but we are the ones who have to read and learn them. That's how one is able to work independently.

If someone thinks, "Today, Lokuswaminwhanse is here. So we should maintain silence. We should clean the surrounding," is he independent? No, he is clinging to something.

Suppose someone thinks, "Oh today, Lokuswaminwhanse is not here." So he speaks loudly and does not do any cleaning." Is this person independent? No, he has been overcome by an unwholesome thought. He's controlled by that unwholesome thought.

Another individual thinks, "The Supreme Buddha has taught us to discipline our physical, verbal and mental actions. The Blessed One has instructed us to do work to support the community of monks. So I must do them regardless of whether senior monks are present here." He wakes up early. Participates in the morning Vandana and does the required work.

If he has a certain level of discipline in the presence of senior monks, he strives to maintain an even a higher level of discipline in the absence of senior monks. If a person thinks and behaves in this way, he truly is independent. Why is that? That's because he is not controlled by unwholesome thoughts. He is independent.

Suppose senior monks are not present one day. Then if someone says, "We don't need to participate in the Vandana today. There's no harm in not sweeping the floor today. No harm in looking around a little while we are at the alms hall either." The person who behaves in this way is giving into unwholesome thoughts. He is not independent.

Therefore, if one becomes disciplined both in the presence and absence of senior monks (especially in the absence) then he will never give into unwholesome thoughts. He's the one who truly becomes independent.

The opposite of independence is dependence. That means to act under the influence of someone or something. Most people in the world are dependent but they believe that they are independent. That is, they think that they are living the way they want. But they are under the influence of unwholesome thoughts (rebelliousness). Such a person is overcome by unwholesome thoughts that arise in his mind. That is not independence.

One place many people go wrong is in not finding true independence. Most people try to live independently without actually being independent. That is, they live with passion, hatred and delusion. His mind is filled with passion. So he always lives together with a second person (passion).

But he believes that he is independent. He is not aware that he is living with a lustful mind that belongs to Māra. As a result, he behaves according to the thoughts that come into his mind. This happens because he tries to be independent without actually being independent. It's just like the dog that is mentioned in the Gaddullabaddha Sutta. Thinking that he is free, the dog walks around. But he is going around a pole and around since he is tied to that pole.

So we must wish to achieve a life that is truly independent. In order to achieve it, we must first realize that right now we are not independent.

To know this, we must realize that:

- ☆ This eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are things that belong to Māra.
- ☆ This eye, the forms seen by the eye are impermanent and are filled with suffering. Therefore, it is not "I," it is not "mine" and it is not my self.

So once we realize that we are not actually independent we must wish to be independent. That is why we must think, "I must eradicate passion, hatred and delusion. I must get liberated from the suffering in saṃsara." This is what is called real independence.

If someone wants to achieve this independence, then he works towards his objective on his own while being in the company of kalyāṇamittas. If not, we lose what we have gained for nothing. So think wisely and try to cultivate these two factors.

If one understands these two factors and relates them to one's own life then he becomes capable of achieving his objective!



It is a meritorious activity to have prepared this as a book of advice for the benefit of many people. May this merit help all those who contributed to this book to realize the Four Noble Truths!

Wishing for the development of the Gautama Supreme Buddha's dispensation and being loyal to Mahamevnawa, Mr. Tissa Jinasena and his staff greatly helped in this meritorious activity. May this meritorious act help them understand the Four Noble Truths!



English translation: Sharing of merit.

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# Advice about Advice

- The one who seeks one's benefit must seek the Dhamma taught by the Supreme Buddha. He must also find out about the lifestyle of monks.
- Associating with kalyanamittas, observing higher precepts and wishing to listen to the words of teachers who teach the Dhamma, well suits the life of a monk.
- Honoring the Supreme Buddha, rejoicing in the Dhamma and attending to the needs of noble monks who have attained fruits and paths, well suits the life of a monk.
- Having a serene conduct, a blameless and pure life and a meditative mind, well suits the life of a monk.
- Having a good knowledge of the Dhamma, contemplating the reality of life and realizing the Four Noble Truths, well suits the life of a monk.

Theragāthā - The Great Arahant Aparagotama

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